Kyle Jarrard • Judith Palmer • Ben Stoltzfus

4.95
N CANADA: $6.25]

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010
VOL. 267, NO. 1

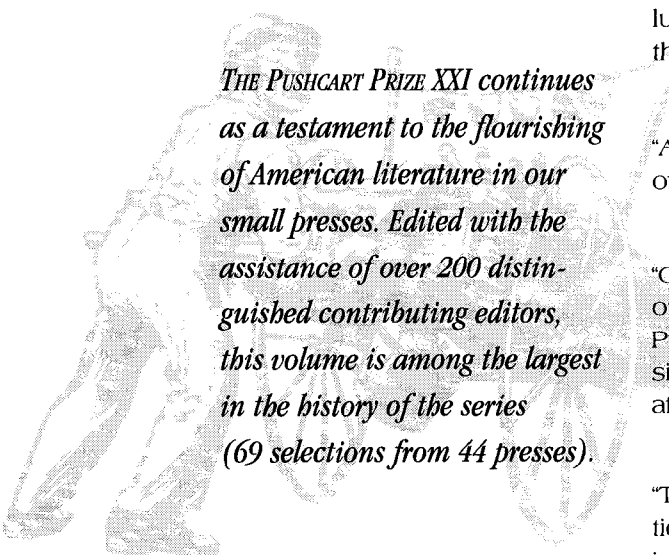
THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MOST HONORED LITERARY SERIES IN AMERICA
BEGINS ITS THIRD DECADE WITH ONE OF THE LARGEST SELECTIONS IN ITS HISTORY

THE 1997 PUSHCART PRIZE XXI
BEST OF THE SMALL PRESSES

Edited by Bill Henderson with the Pushcart Prize editors



THE PUSHCART PRIZE XXI continues as a testament to the flourishing of American literature in our small presses. Edited with the assistance of over 200 distinguished contributing editors, this volume is among the largest in the history of the series (69 selections from 44 presses).

625 PAGES $29.50
HARDBOUND
JUST PUBLISHED

PUSHCART PRESS
P.O. Box 380
Wainscott, N.Y. 11975

"... a truly remarkable collection of the finest small press poems, essays, and short fiction."
BOOKLIST

"A surprising, vital collection that should hearten all serious readers."
KIRKUS REVIEWS

"A fascinating peek at the vast and largely hidden world of non-commercial publishing."
TIME

"There is nothing else quite like this labor of love... long may it appear."
CHOICE

"Indispensable... Get it, read it, lug it around with you; as always this book is essential."
LIBRARY JOURNAL

"An exceptionally strong sampling of contemporary writers."
NEW REPUBLIC

"Of all the anthologies that come out each year, the one from the Pushcart Press is perhaps the single best measure of the state of affairs in American literature today."
THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

"There may be no better combination of overview, entertainment, invention and play each year than the Pushcart collections."
WORLD LITERATURE TODAY

"Of all the anthologies, Pushcart's is the most rewarding."
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Call for entries

The North American Review
Fourth Biennial
Cover Competition

How to Enter
Do not submit the original work. Send a 35mm slide transparency, clearly marked with the artist's name, mailing address, and phone number. Indicate front and top of work. Please enclose an entry blank (photocopy O.K.) and, if you want the slide returned, a self-addressed stamped envelope. Send all entries to:

Cover Contest
The North American Review
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls IA 50614-0516

Deadline
All entries must be postmarked no later than 1 November 1997.

Competition

Graphic designers, illustrators, printmakers, and other visual artists (professionals and students) are invited to compete in the illustration or design of the cover of The North American Review. The winning entry will be used as the cover of the March/April 1998 issue of the magazine.

Guidelines

Entries may be carried out in any medium or combination of media, in any colors with the exception of metallic or fluorescent pigments. (No photographs, please.) Entries must be the proportion of the cover of the *NAR* (8 1/8 inches wide by 10 7/8 inches high). To facilitate color separation, the original artwork should measure no wider than 19 inches and no higher than 25. All entries must anticipate the contrast required for the superimposition of the magazine logo across the top portion of the illustration.

All styles of illustration, design and fine arts are welcomed and encouraged. All entries must be the original work of the person who enters the competition. Each person may submit only one entry.

Fees and Awards

There are no entry fees. The winner of the competition will receive a check for $300, published credit, a one-year subscription to the *NAR* and 50 tear sheets of the finished cover.

Judging
Final judge for the competition will be Gary Kelley, internationally-known illustrator and cover art director of the *NAR*.

NAR Cover Competition Entry Blank
Please type or print clearly

Name of Artist _____

Address_____City_____State____Zip_____

Phone ( ) _____ Med_____ Original size_____

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

■

"But those were innocent days." So ends Mel Lavine's brief memoir (page 46) of his first editor, some forty-odd years ago in a Maine textile town. We confess to a particular personal interest in the memoir and its subject—not so much because we have followed Mel's career through his recent retirement after years with CBS News and Charles Kuralt's "Sunday Morning" program, but because Norman "Red" McCann was our own first editor as well, a year or so before Mel arrived at the Sanford *Tribune.*

How odd it seems today to read of familiar names and events so far in the past. It is a special sort of conjuring; it brings back the dead, and makes petty history large by endowing it with the message of mortality. Innocent days, indeed. Sanford was a place of lazy evenings parked on Main Street, where you saw everyone you knew and wanted to know, where the easy pace of New England life was confirmed and validated, where you could drink from a fountain in the town park and taste a world that had not yet caught up with its post-war technologies and economies.

Urban renewal first defaced the town and progress finished the job. Main Street today is a tourist raceway. The park is a hangout for cigarette-smoking teens and pathetic old men. The *Tribune* doesn't even exist. Mel Lavine wouldn't recognize the setting of his first newspaper job, and he'd have one hell of a time finding a newspaper man as idealistic—and in the best sense *innocent*—as Red McCann.

This is a number of the NAR heavy on the poetry, the poets themselves new to our pages. It is also a venturesome number, offering a collaboration (page 19) between artist Judith Palmer and writer Ben Stoltzfus; what emerges is a section of "pictonovel" that is, for us at least, a happy experiment.

By way of fair warning: this magazine will continue its bi-monthly publication schedule with one exception. In May we will publish a "double issue" to see our readers through the hot summer, then resume our usual pattern in September. We hope Constant Reader approves.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE
NORTH AMERICAN
REVIEW

FOUNDED IN 1815 VOLUME 282, NO. 1 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1997

EDITOR
Robley Wilson

POETRY
Peter Cooley

ART
Gary Kelley
Osie L. Johnson, Jr.

ENVIRONMENT
Terry Tempest Williams

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Margaret Atwood, Susan Bergman, Robert Dana, Perry Glasser, Margaret Morganroth Gullette, David Hellerstein, Leo J. Hertzel, Robert L. King, Barry Lopez, Michael Martone, Stephen Minot, Mary Peterson, Barry Sanders, Scott Russell Sanders, Natalia Rachel Singer, Lawrence Sturhahn, Gloria Vando, Eric Zencey

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Paul Plisiewicz

BUSINESS MANAGER
Charlotte L. Wilson

EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES:
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0516

RATES
$4.95 a copy; $22.00 a year in the U.S. and its possessions, $29.00 a year in Canada, and $32.00 in all other countries

CREDITS:
Cover: "THE HARD FALL" *by John Collier*

Illustrations & drawings: *William Francis Bisbee, James Michael Dorsey, Kali Sanders, M. Kasper*

FICTION

12 The Watch, *by Kyle Jarrard*
19 Romoland, *by Judith Palmer & Ben Stoltzfus*
30 Shaft Men, *by George Dila*
34 Photographs, *by Kevin Casey*
36 Seven Famous Old Men, *by Dan Coffey*

POETRY

18 At the Highway 41 Drive-In Theater, *by Todd Smith*
29 Translating Ecclesiastes, *by Jay Ladin*
32 New Age, *by Michael Waters*
45 Winter, *by A. Manette Ansay*
49 Scene in a Snowdome Diorama, *by Sean Webb*

DEPARTMENTS

4 Natural Orders: ABSENCE AND LIGHT, *by John R. Campbell*
7 Cody's Tales: JO, *by Lawrence L. Sturhahn*
38 American Eye: TREE HUGGERS AND DAMNED COWBOYS—THE RHETORIC OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT, *by Peter Chilson*
46 The Literary Life: "RED," *by Mel Lavine*
51 Familiar Matters: WHAT BECOMES DEBRIS, *by Michael Erard*

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW [ISSN 0029-2397], January/February 1997, Vol 282, No. 1. Published bimonthly, in January, March, May (a double issue), September & November by the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0516. Annual subscription rates $22.00 in the United States and its possessions, $29.00 in Canada, $32.00 in all other countries. Periodical postage paid at Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-9998.
Copyright © 1997 by the University of Northern Iowa.
Phone/FAX: (319) 273-6455; E-mail: NAR@UNI.EDU.
All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced in any form without the express written permission of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of the University of Northern Iowa.
Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage affixed. *Fiction manuscripts are read only between January 1 and April 1 annually.* Claims for subscriber copies not received must be made within six weeks of date of publication. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to *The North American Review*, University of Northern Iowa, 1222 W. 27th St., Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0516. THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW is indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, the Humanities Index (including a full-text electronic version), Index to Little Magazines, Index of American Periodical Verse, the Book Review Index, the American Humanities Index, and others. Member of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP). Article reprints and back file volumes in microform are available from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 or 18 Bedford Row, London WCIR 4EJ. U.S. and Canadian newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., One Media Way, 12406 Route 250, Milan OH 44846-9705. PRINTED IN USA.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Absence and Light

JOHN R. CAMPBELL

MT. SHASTA IS TRUANT today, hidden without guile by clouds. It's early November, and Lower Klamath Lake is rich in autumn textures. As I drive the refuge roads, the ducks murmuring in the marsh are so numerous that their combined voices remind me of swarming insects, a sound rife with high chaos.

The sky is piled with a complex of grays, sporadic horizontal fronts and vertical shafts of rain. The ground is seasoned with mature yellows and oranges from the grasses, the cattails, the bullrushes. In some of the fields, golds are broken by hummocks, dark umber, where rolled hay has been left to decompose. Patches of water open and close, sometimes silver, sometimes slate, always embellished with the exquisite bodies of birds.

The Klamath Marshes mark the confluence of the Pacific and the Mountain Flyways near the Oregon/California border. They consist mainly of three shallow lakes: the Upper Klamath, the Lower Klamath, and Tule Lake. Each spring and fall great numbers of waterfowl stage here on their migrations north and south. On a given day over a million birds might inhabit the lakes, the reeds, and the surrounding fields.

The Klamath Basin hosted, in the Pleistocene, a pluvial sea of a thousand square miles. Even in historical times, when European settlers arrived in the late 1800s, the remnants of that sea extended over most of the area, covering some 185,000 acres. Now less than twenty-five percent of the historical wetlands remains, as most of the marsh was drained and converted, with government subsidies, to agricultural lands.

So everywhere absence infuses the terrain. Once supplies arriving from Yreka, California were loaded at Laird's Landing onto a flatboat that brought them north to the town of Klamath Falls. Now the landing is a remote and stony field, where the dry facts mingle with the past. And there is, as always, a tinge of irony in the landscape: nearby are barley fields, planted with subsidies provided by the same government which encouraged the original "reclamation" of the swamps. The grain is left standing in the fields exclusively for the birds.

I'm learning that absent landscapes more than embroider the actual—they inform the actual with a complexity amounting to total mystery. Only from the totality of the unknown and the lost can known forms arise for our discovery. But for all the triumph and wonder present in the Klamath Basin, the advent of the landscape in contemporary consciousness has a tragic character as well. If I'm stunned by the autumn arrival of a million birds, how am I to imagine the spectacle of *six* million waterfowl arriving only a hundred years ago? The settlers told of deafening roars, of flocks that blotted out the sun.

When a biblical sense of a fall from grace informs our understanding of the land, absent landscapes become paradisal. The age of innocence has inevitably passed. Today no part of the earth is untouched by our cultural intervention, whether direct or indirect. Only in the absent landscape is the natural order fully preserved. And here science and religion intersect, as both tell an irrefutable story of loss. Both are largely unwilling to take their full share of responsibility for that loss, but instead offer hope of salvation. Everywhere the past is characterized by abundance, the present by diminishment, so that a viable future requires some gross form of salvation.

A new fiction is possible, though, one that serves us by allowing us communion with the earth. In seeking a fiction that is not a lie, I must first look to the actual life of the marshes as best I can.

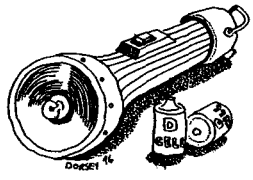
I BEGIN BY TRUSTING in an alliance between myself and my earth. More than an alliance, in fact—I must realize the self *as* the earth and try to continue as the earth itself will. Look: what *are* the Klamath Marshes composed of? What gives them their identity, what makes them unique as selves are unique? Are they merely products of geological processes over time? Or are they a product of biological forces? Certainly human prehistory has played a part, as the petroglyphs near Tule Lake suggest. Maybe theology can best explain the character of the marshes. Or poetry. Or the oral literature and folklore of the area. Perhaps the Klamath Marshes are the product of a complex combination of various forces, each with a discipline designed to describe it.

When I look at the vivid life as it exists here, though, I see that place is not a product at all; it is better characterized, if one must, as a pattern. The notion of nature as product is metaphorical, the metaphor based in a very limited range of activities that tool-bearing humans engage in as a matter of survival. The product metaphor is promoted by our industrial and consumer-based culture; it's no surprise that we would create metaphors and fictions based in our own activities. But metaphors, if they are alive, can

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

outlive their usefulness. New metaphors are always possible, and the flexibility to quickly adapt to new environments (both cultural and natural) characterizes us as a species.

So what is a marsh, if not a product? Isn't it a collection of discrete components like birds, grasses, and water? I would answer these questions with more questions: Can these entities exist independently of each other? And what are these components made of? Cells, molecules? Do cells, do molecules produce anything as independent entities? Does a single-celled animal exist apart from a medium for life? Does hydrogen produce heat or water independent of other particles? Independent of energy? Of time? The closer one looks at the notion of a product, of an externally created entity, the more elusive that entity becomes. Quantum theory holds, as Fritjof Capra says, that "Subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities, but can only be understood as interconnections.... As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated 'building blocks,' but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. These relations always include the observer in an essential way."



When I realize that nothing exists except as an intimate collaborator with others, the concepts of product and producer become conflated. And happily so, because this conflation allows me to abandon the external producer, god or nature as creator. It allows me to participate in nature naturing, and to sense that I am not a product of the world as much as I am part and parcel of the pattern we call earth. Kenneth Rexroth, in the introduction to his *Collected Longer Poems*, says, "The real objects are their own transcendental meaning. If reality can be apprehended without grasping, the epistemological problem vanishes. The beginning of experience is the same as the end of it."

And it's the end of experience that informs the absent landscape. I believe that by experiencing the end of one world as a given, "without grasping," we can usher in the beginning of another. By allowing the land its own internal creation, by recognizing the human as a part of that internal pattern, we can revise rather than merely recoup. When our emphasis moves from a paradise lost toward an ongoing earth, we can put our faith in the actual present, where it can thrive, rather than in the past, where it withers in worn-out soil. This is not to deny or devalue the past; it is only to say that our energy can not be cycled there.

ABSENT LANDSCAPES are real. They exist not only in our minds, which can be kind environments, but in the present landscape itself, as active factors. The urges that direct the bird migrations here have directed those migrations for ages. At a genetic level, the ancient animals are still among us. David Rains Wallace, writing of the Klamath Mountains to the west, articulates this sense of animal continuity: "I was seeing a bear as it really is, not only a black animal in a forest, but a part of a long wave of black animals surging upward from depths of time imperceptible to normal senses." Flip the image from black to brilliant white, multiply the single animal by ten thousand, and you have a flock of snow geese swelling like a single organism as it rises from Tule Lake. Suddenly the depth of time is augmented by the breadth of numerous, unified bodies, and the notion of an animal as a simple individual is obliterated. Further, on the scale of evolutionary time, radical transformations of animals are commonplace: the very dinosaurs that once roamed the landscape have returned to us as birds. Where are we to place identity and self in this massive flux?

Ascending to the northwest from the Klamath Basin, one comes across Crater Lake, with an astounding depth of 1,932 feet. Some seven thousand years ago, Mt. Mazama erupted, scattering ash on the southwesterly winds over hundreds of thousands of square miles, extending its shattered self as far as Alberta and Saskatchewan. More than five thousand square miles of the immediate terrain were blanketed to a depth of six inches, allowing springs to later breathe under the pumice. What was left at the mountain itself was a negative space, a crater that eventually filled with water. So Mt. Mazama is responsible still for the qualities of far-flung landscapes, and for the lake that inhabits its absence. That most violent disappearance allowed for the remarkable depth, color, and clarity of present Crater Lake.

Think of the glacial presence in the landscapes of the world. Think of the soils scraped from the north that nurture crops farther south. Of the absent rivers that flow in the contours of valleys, of their deposited silt that also feeds us. Of the jungles that have laid down their carbon and formed the petroleum that fuels our cars.

Lao Tzu said, "Thirty spokes unite in one nave, and because of the part where nothing is we have use of the wheel." A watershed, for example, is a broad area characterized by the emptying of its waters into a main stream which constitutes, like Lao Tzu's spokes, very little of the totality of the wheel. We can, through informed imagination, attribute much of the character of the land and much of our own sustenance to absence or absent landscapes. They originated our narrative of the land; now they allow our narrative to continue.

Perhaps this is why virtually all creation myths involve a type of absent landscape, a pre-original space, which informs the creation even as it is re-placed. Indeed, without this space, there is no possibility of story. For how are we to imagine and describe the void? What choice do we have but to endow it with characteristics absent to the void proper?

One creation story, from the subarctic Bungees Cree people,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

involves the geese in pre-original space:

BEFORE THE CREATION, the world was a wide waste of water, without any inhabitants, except a few geese, which from some unknown parts paid occasional visits.

Weese-ke-jak found upon questioning them that they came from a country far away in the distant south, where there was plenty of land. Weese-ke-jak lost no time in making a bargain with the geese, that they would bring him a sample of earth on their next visit, which they did.

With the earth thus brought to him, Weese-ke-jak made the world, which he adorned with grass, trees, and herbs. This was followed by the creation of all the animals, reptiles, fowls, and fish.

IN THE LOGIC OF this myth, geese can prefigure all animals, and a piece of earth can prefigure the world. A kind of metonymy dominates: out of the part, the whole becomes imaginable. So why not imagine the geese at Tule Lake as emissaries from a pre-original place? Absent landscapes both north and south—the Arctic and the central valleys of California—have in part created the Klamath Marshes through the agency of geese. The geese need the marshes as staging grounds in their spring and fall migrations; they string their various habitats together into a flyway, a strand of pearls in which each pearl contains something of the others. The geese's animal power is vital to the character of the place. And besides, they form the landscape in a more tangible manner: the grain fields were planted to feed the flocks, planted in penance for our past eradications.

Our imagination and language are natural processes emerging out of other natural processes. If actual landscapes originate in absent landscapes, then so do our actual conceptions of the land originate in absent qualities. This is why the past so often seems paradisal, I suppose: we've chosen the absent qualities of abundance and innocence to describe our present state of scarcity and decadence. We are, as always, myth-makers.

The stories we tell as we continue to alter the land might rely more on the quality of absence in order to more fully understand the scales, complexities, and interconnections we are attempting to describe. Void, as the Buddhists have long known, is the core and periphery of all being. Even as particular forms abound and multiply, they move not *from* absence as much as *in* absence, not only in their inevitable deaths or transmutations, but also in their intersection with other forms, their movement toward totality, which is also the void. From space, itself mostly void, we can see the particulars of our planet join to form a living geometry we call Earth. We know, as Loren Eisley said, that "Earth is the mightiest of creatures. She contains beneath her furry hide the dark heart of nothingness, from which springs all that lives. She is the wariest and most complete of animals, for she lends herself to no particular form and in the end she soundlessly forsakes them all."

Ultimately, we need to value absence enough to inhibit our own population and our ever-increasing alteration of the earth. The absence of man can be an ideal rather than a fear. The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness "in contrast with those areas where man and his own work dominate the landscape... an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor and does not remain."

As artificial and tentative as it is, this definition at least includes the concept of absence as a positive value. The problem, of course, is in the conception of man as visitor. We obviously have more effect than benign guests: we delineated the political wilderness landscape in the first place! Can we imagine, though, using the model of wilderness landscapes, the value of our absence from other, future landscapes? If we are capable of such imaginings, we might begin to fathom the enormous impact on the land that our own absence produces. We might learn to think in the negative and thus refine our crude notions of progress. We might, as a matter of fact, begin to inhabit the land as a consequence of our own chosen absence.

FOR NOW, RAIN DRUMS on the truck cab, making me sleepy. I stop to doze, to dream inside a small rectangle in the marsh. As the rain rolls off the ducks' oiled feathers, so it rolls off my metal shell. I know that our only hope in valuing absence, paradoxically, involves trusting surface: texture, odor, ambient sound, and most of all, light. Our distrust of surfaces is due to our concern with depth, by which we mean invisible underlying causes. But the depth of nature, its profound ability to accommodate all life and death, is not a cause so much as a substanceless process, an unfathomable interplay of surfaces. So doesn't the ability of the marsh to sustain birds (which lends it its very identity) derive from innumerable and mysterious surface factors?

If I'm right, then art, with its emphasis on the sensual, can help us begin to value absence. Looking through a rain-dappled windshield at the textures of the marsh before me, I can't help but think of Monet, who depicted light as particles. The interplay between these particles makes the landscape whole. And looking among the raindrops, I can see, on a culvert—it's been perched there all along—a great horned owl watching in the rain.

The living are regulated both literally and figuratively by something larger than the individual: light. Who knows light better than the artist? Looking at Monet's beacon-like haystacks, the light is within and without. Kenneth Rexroth asserts that "True illumination is habitude. We are unaware that we live in the light of lights because it casts no shadow. When we become aware of it we know it as birds know air and fish know water. It is the ultimate trust." This light of lights, then, is the final expression of absence: "it casts no shadow." The light of lights is the final expression of the environment, too, in that we are immersed in the void so naturally as to render it ungraspable, utterly mysterious because it's so completely known. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■

Jo

LAWRENCE L. STURHAHN

WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY of broken families, single parent households, abandoned and/or illegitimate children of mothers who often have barely entered into their teens. We live in a culture freighted with violence, fueled by acquisition and greed, addicted to myriad vices—only the most obvious of which are drugs and alcohol. From morning to night we rush from pillar to post, harried and forgetful, attempting to function with the nagging consciousness that there's not enough time to get whatever it is done.

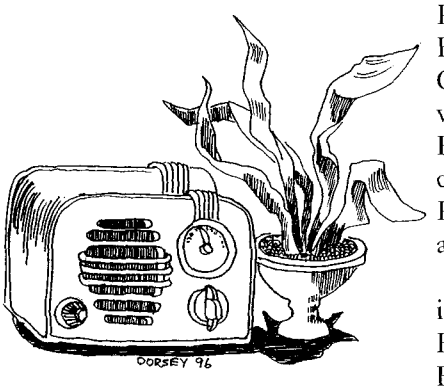
I don't know the current statistics on divorce, on single parent families, on how many struggle below the poverty line—but they're all too high. If there's a family at all, we have named it—with terrible irony, it seems—a nuclear one.

Once upon a time there was what was called an extended family—what happened to it?—L. L. S.

MY MAIDEN NAME was Willie Jo Hughs. That's on my birth certificate—not Josephine, just Jo. And I was born in 1914 in Amity, Arkansas, which is in kind of the southern part of the state, along the Caddo River. It was beautiful there. The streams were clear, and rocky-bottomed—and really beautiful trees. Of course it has a lot more people there now than back then! It was real small then, a village—one bank, general mercantile store, one school— Yes, kindergarten, first grade through high school. I really don't remember Amity very well, I was only a baby there, and I grew up in several places. In Hot Springs, Arkansas and in Texarkana, Texas. The family moved around some, we even went to California when I was little. My father was a farmer, just an ordinary farmer. And I have one sister and two brothers—the oldest deceased—I'm the oldest surviving child. The family comes from Scotland or Ireland, I think, but they were in this country a long time. I haven't traced it all the way back, but as far back as I know, we were in this country.

I went to business college in Texarkana, studied commercial business, learned to type, do shorthand, and then I got a job, first in a doctor's office. Then I went to Dallas and went to work for an insurance company. Well, I went to secretarial school over there, just for a short time, to get my foot in the door to find a job, 'cause I didn't know from nothing. And so pretty soon they sent me out on a temporary job, and I worked for a few days and then they hired me permanently. And I worked there until I married, when they let me go. They let you go if you married. In those days, if you were married, you didn't need a job. They had rules like that then. They don't now.

I'm eighty-two years old... eighty-three in December. And I got married in 1937—in Dallas. My husband's name was James W. Hall. I was working in Dallas when I came to meet him. My family lived in Texarkana then, and I would go home over the weekends. One time I went out with some friends, to a place run by a young man who had a friend in Dallas. When I said I was from Dallas, he said, "Hey, I got a friend over there. I want you to meet him." So he gave me his telephone number and address and said, "When you get back to Dallas call him. Tell him I sent you. Tell him Bud sent you." So I called him, and James said "How 'bout I come over and we go out for a Coke?" I said O.K.—and that was it. It wasn't a long courtship—maybe a few months, but it was a steady one—and then we were married for fifty years—and we had five sons.



The oldest is James Hall, Jr. Graduated from the University of Arizona, he's an engineer, worked for San Diego Gas & Electric, and just retired at Christmas time. He's about 55 and tells me how he stays busy now, feeding the pigeons morning and afternoon.

My second son is Philip Len Hall. He lives in Boulder, retired from the Army a colonel; he's also an engineer. He now works for a lab that does pollution and environmental clean-ups.

Our third boy, Don, who lives in Phoenix, is a captain for Southwest Airlines, and he's also an engineer.

My fourth son is Richard Charles Hall, and he lives in California, and works for Intel. He's a what-do-you-call-it—? Public Relations man, not an engineer.

And my fifth son is Andrew David Hall, he lives in Bakersfield, California. He's another engineer, and works for Texaco Oil Company.

All engineers! Was your husband an engineer?

No.

Really? What was he? What did your husband do?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Choice Magazine Listening

a free audio cassette magazine for people unable to read standard print

Do you know someone who misses the joy of reading because of loss of vision or other handicap?

If so, why not tell that person about **CHOICE MAGAZINE LISTENING?** This free service provides 8 hours of audio tapes every other month with unabridged selections from over 100 publications such as the *New Yorker, Smithsonian, Atlantic, North American Review* and *Scientific American.*

CML subscribers have been reading the world's best minds for 30 years in selections by writers such as Saul Bellow, John McPhee, Annie Dillard, Grace Paley, Russell Banks, William Styron, Seamus Heaney and Garrison Keillor.

The special 4-track cassette player is provided free, on permanent loan, by the Library of Congress. For information: CML, Dept NA, 85 Channel Drive, Port Washington, NY 11050. Or call 516-883-8280.

CHOICE

MAGAZINE LISTENING

A TALKING MAGAZINE

He was a milkman.

A....?

A milkman!

A milkman? Really—? [We both laugh]

He didn't have the educational opportunity that the boys had here at the University.

Did all your sons go to the University of Arizona?

Yes, we were fortunate to live here. We couldn't have afforded it otherwise.

So, do you have any idea why all your sons chose to be engineers?

No, I really don't know why they did; they just liked it.

You think they followed one after the other?

Maybe they did, I really don't know. Except Richard—he was havin' a party...

The PR man?

Uh-huh.

So how many grandchildren do you have?

Eleven— Uh, they run in age from about three to about twenty-five...

And have all your sons remained married to the same women?

Uhh—yeah, sure.

Well, you say 'sure,' but in our culture that's unusual. I mean, you come from a very strong, powerful extended family. That's rare in our culture.

Right. We do. We're a very close-knit family.

Do you have any idea why that's true?

I really don't know, except there's a desire to be close.

And you all visit each other several times a year.

We do. We get together. We were all together at Christmas time—except for Phil and his wife, but the rest of us were together at Ricky's house at Christmas time.

So that makes how many people all together—?

It was a house full! They were sleeping on mattresses on the floor, and all over the place, but we had lots of fun.

So, all in all, there's five men and their wives, that's ten. Plus thirteen grandchildren, that's twenty-three, plus you. That's twenty-four people.

At least! Sometimes friends come along; the boys have friends, and their wives and families would come... [she laughs] We generally meet several times a year. We met at Thanksgiving, on the desert. The boys bring their motor homes, four-wheel-drives, trailers, whatever —they like to drive over the rough terrain, go to the old mines, and abandoned places, you know? They know the desert like a book, the desert and the mountains. We go to Death Valley once a year—they're planning a Death Valley trip in the spring, before it gets hot. We enjoy going over there. And last summer we went to Telluride, Colorado. Mostly, the main thing is the rides we go on. In Colorado we went all up and down the mountains, on the trails, seeing the scenery, exploring... In the desert we do the same thing. As soon as breakfast is over, and everything done up and everybody's ready, we take off, and one follows the other—five or six dune buggies, and I ride along in one of them.

Each family is responsible for a meal, a dinner meal one day—the food, and the cooking, and the preparation, and the cleaning up.

So, if you were to characterize your life, would you say that you had a good life?

I would say I had a good life. I'm really thankful. I've had a wonderful life. Never had money, but plenty to eat, and not everything we wanted, maybe, that money can buy, but we had a lot of things worth more than money. We had a close family, we love each other a lot. We worked hard. I have no complaints. I would consider I've been very fortunate. I've had good health all my life—never been sick—we all had good health. My children were never seriously ill, no surgeries. My husband was healthy up until his last two years.

I tried to have nourishing foods. My children never went to school without breakfast, that was unheard of. They always had nourishing meals—I cooked vegetables, I cooked, you know, square meals. My sister says I'm a good plain cook. And we always had lots of milk, plenty of milk to drink. They

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could go through gallons a day, those boys. And we managed to buy it somehow, I don't know. We needed a cow.

Well, James was a milkman...

[She laughs] So I guess that was fortunate for us, maybe. But, anyway, they all just happened to be strong and healthy from birth up.

O.K., SO WHAT DID YOU DO for entertainment while your children were growing up? Did you and your husband go dancing?

No. No we didn't. I'm not against dancing. My husband just didn't like to go to dances, and things like that. We didn't do a lot for entertainment. We would go to movies once in a while. We usually took the children with us, and went on vacation in the summer, to go to the Pacific coast. We always managed to get over there once a year. We could get a place down on the beach then, before it was all developed. We'd get a motel, close to the beach, and stay on the beach. It was a big happy time for us, 'cause we come out of the desert. We were dry. It was wonderful.

Did you like traveling?

Oh yes, we loved traveling. We got to Washington D.C.—of course Phil was living there at that time. Wherever we went, we could just visit around, you know. We went to Washington state a couple times, when he was there, in Seattle. Of course, numerous times in California. We like to go to North Arizona, for the mountains, in the summer time.

When you describe your own family, would you say that your sons have good lives?

Yes, I would. I would say they all have good lives, and I'm real proud of them. They all have good families. They all have good jobs. They all live in nice homes—a lot better than I've ever had—but I'm real happy for them. And they're all good to me. Don, especially, but then the rest don't live as close as he does.

When my husband died, I just stayed here in this house, and continued to run the trailer park. He was running it before; he always ran it. That was his business. I took care of up here, and he took care of down there. But when he was gone, I just took over, and just did it myself. I just thought I had no reason to become dependent on anybody. I hope that I'll always be independent. I don't want to depend on my children for anything, even if they might be willing. I don't care. They don't owe me anything.

Then when James died, I was thinking this is an old, old house, and maybe I'll move. But the boys all had a fit, you know, they wouldn't hear of it. Oh, they threw a fit! And they all have nice, nice homes, you know. But they said this is home. Andy said, "This is the finest place in the country! Don't ever get rid of this house! This is the most wonderful home anywhere." Well, and he has a lovely home in Burbank, but he said this was the finest house in the world! Well, I thought that was pretty good. We are just well blessed.

Do you have any idea why that should be true of you?

No, I really don't know.

Was it a matter of luck, or some divine process at work?

Well, I think everybody has divine guidance. If they ask for it, I think they have. And I had a praying mother, I'm sure that she probably pulled us out a lot of times before I realized the importance of it.

I'M SOUTHERN BAPTIST. I've never been anything else, never belonged to any other denomination.

And you go to church every...

I try to go every week.

Do you do any other kind of church work?

Oh, not anymore. I used to work in the church more. Teaching children, and doing extra things that needed to be done, and the nursery for a long time. Took care of the babies.

So, let me ask this question. There's been a lot of changes in your lifetime?

Oh yes, wonderful!

Wonderful changes?

Well, some good, some bad.

Tell me about that.

Well, the advances in almost

"Every man in his lifetime should have a son, write a book, and plant a tree."

—A proverb from several languages

Where does it say he should also own a handgun?

A public service message from The North American Review

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

everything; in knowledge, in conveniences, the way that people don't have to work as hard as they used to. They have all kinds of machines, and automation, and things. I've seen from the time people had to dig ditches by hand, to where it's all done by machines. I don't think we could have all the things that we have if we didn't have such big heavy machinery to do it with now. Oh, so many things that are different now. I grew up in the country where we didn't even have conveniences: we didn't have dishwashers, we didn't have running water. I saw the day when I thought that running water was a convenience. And my mother, till the day she died, always thought it was wonderful that water came out of a faucet!

And politically, what are your inclinations?

What am I politically? I'm conservative.

Conservative. What does that mean to you?

Well, that means they ought to kick a lot of people off of welfare, and make 'em go to work. We grew up poor, we never ever dreamed of having a dime given to us. We worked. We didn't expect welfare. Never dreamed of it.

So would you call yourself a Republican?

Right. That's how I vote... Republican.

Right across the board?

Right across the board. Most... usually, though maybe some individuals that I would vote for....I'm not dyed in the wool, that I wouldn't vote for someone else. I don't always vote a straight ticket.

So one of the other changes that's come about in the years has been the different roles that men and women take ...

Well, that has changed a lot. Women work away from home, and the children are put into daycare, and things like that.

Are you in favor of that?

If it's necessary.... I worked. I worked between when my children got to the later stage, I would work for several months at a time, during the years, between my children. It was somewhat necessary.

And attached to those changes in the roles has been what's called women's liberation. What do you feel about that?

Well, I'm not a women's libber. I guess I'm old-fashioned. But, as far as I can see it, men made the living, and women took care of the children, they had a good thing going. I think that's a lot easier than having to run the household and go to work, too.

So what do you feel about this country?

Well, I worry about it. I think the crime...we've seen a lot of that increase, even from the time that my children went to school, and the way it is now. The gangs, and all of that we have now, and the terrible teenage crime. I think the children need to have a better home life, and foundation, and teaching.

I think that people don't spend enough time or interest in their families or children. There are too many broken homes, and too many children who don't even have a father at home. I think that family life is important. I think that a father and a mother need to be with children, and they need to instill in them principles, Christian principles. And there are a lot of children

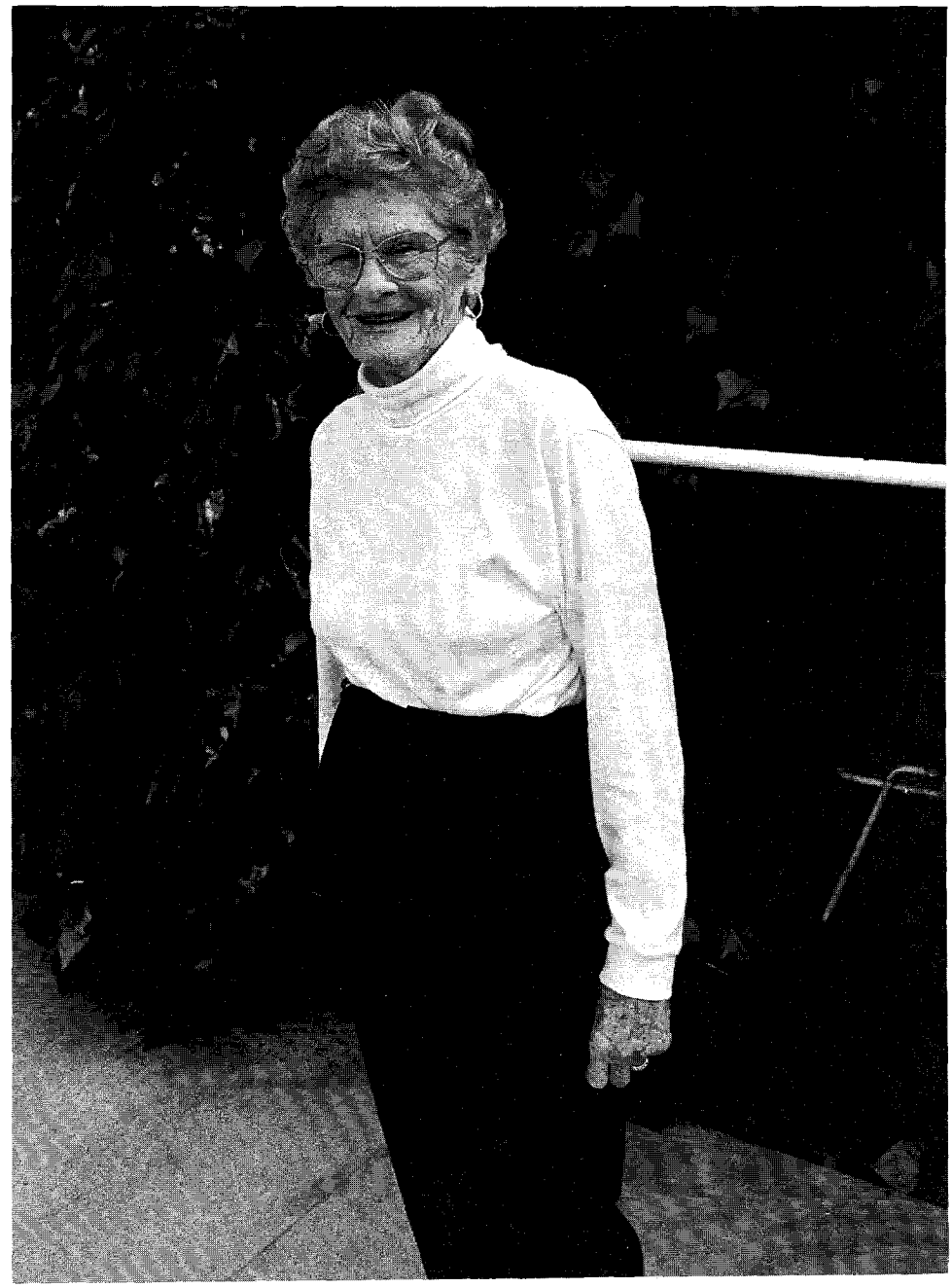


PHOTO BY LAWRENCE L. STURHAHN

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who don't have that advantage.

Are all your sons conservative men?

Yes, I'd say, more or less.

So you believe in the Christian God?

Yes, I do. Yes, sir.

ARE YOU AWARE OF SOME of the things that are beginning to be discovered, historically? That before the advent of Christianity, a lot of the world was a matriarchy? That it wasn't gods, it was goddesses, and...

Now wait a minute, who was goddesses?

Instead of being a god...

Oh, I see, goddesses. Were those idols, or were they...? They were something they believed in?

Right. Many civilizations were, more or less, religiously inclined toward being a matriarchy. In other words, women were the power...in society.

And what age was that now?

Before Christianity.

You mean back to the time of Moses and beyond that?

Before that. Basically, matriarchies. The major deity figures were women.

How 'bout that. I'm not aware of that.

And some people these days feel that some of the problems that we face in modern times is due to what is called the patriarchy coming in. In other words, the change from the matriarchy, women being the powerful beings, to men being the powerful beings. These days they talk about women being in touch with the earth, being in touch with all of the things that are basic to us, and that men tend to be flighty. The more powerful figure is the Earth, the Earth-Mother. What are your thoughts about that? As a women who was raised in an extended family, and raised an extended family herself, a very powerful family, a strong family, and a very together family...what do you think about all that? 'Cause in effect you represent what some would say is the value that women offer to the world, that they are close to family, closer to children, closer to the earth, closer to the real values.

Well, I'm sure of that. I think they probably essentially would be closer to the children, they nurture them, they give birth to them, so by rights I think they would be—and usually they're with the children in the home more than the father, if he's a working man and away from home more.

And after the advent of the patriarchy, through the years since the birth of Christ—and it's not really the birth of Christ, just some time after that, but let's call it that, historically—women were called witches and burned at the staked and tortured, just because they were women.

Just because they were women? Is that right?

Right. So, part of the women's liberation concept is based on the fact that women have been so badly used in our society, or in modern society, or since those days.

That can be true, in many cases, I'm sure.

So, it's food for thought.

But Christ thinks that?

Well, Christ was different from Christianity. The word Christianity comes from him, but he was . . .

He was God incarnate.

He was different, it's hard to describe, he was more than many Christian religions are. He was larger . . .

What you're talking about predates the bible. I'm not too knowledgeable on that.

Do you read the bible still?

I read it, yes, I do. I try to read it every day. Some days I miss, I don't read as studiously as I should. I'm taking a bible class right now. But I'm a real believer.

When I was trying to sell the motor home that James and I owned, I decided to pray about it. I pray about a lot of things, and I get answers. And so I said "Lord, please, I'd like to sell the mobile home, but you know it has some problems, and I don't want to cheat anybody. I'd like to get a fair price, if it's your will for me to sell it. I don't have to sell, but I want to be fair about it. Would you send me somebody that knows how to work on a mobile home. You know it requires work on it sometime. And somebody that's familiar, somebody that's mechanically inclined, and I don't want to sell it to somebody who would be unawares, and take it out on the highway and maybe have problems. So I want it to be the right person. If it's your will for me to sell it, and I want it to be a fair deal, so if that's OK with you, you send me somebody to buy it. Well, this man SHOWED UP!! And he was exactly the answer to my prayer. He bought it.

You can feel things. You know?

I know.

Are you a believer?

Yes. I'm not a Christian, but I believe in God.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

I believe in Jesus Christ, the man, and that he was a very powerful man, and that he had a great, strong spirituality.

But you haven't accepted him as your Saviour? You need to do that.

IN THE WOMEN'S Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets, *under the subject of "Motherhood," Barbara Walker paraphrases Lewis Mumford that "the devaluation of motherhood leaves children of both sexes cut off from a vital experience, the essential basis of all future commitments to cooperative functioning in the social context."*

Walker goes on to paraphrase George Gilder that "few men can attain psychological maturity at all without a vital connection with the sense of futurity through intimate association with a woman. She has, as part of her very sexuality, a sense of the future: a sense of evolution and growth, a notion of deferring pleasure for future gains, a sense of the phases and seasons of life, a devotion to the value of the individual human being. These sentiments are the very source of human morality.

"Indeed," Walker continues, "these are precisely the sentiments embodied in matriarchal religions' cyclic, future-oriented view of life. Such religions were free of the neurotic quest for indefinable 'meaning' in life, since they never assumed that life would be required to justify itself. They were also generally free of anxiety, guilt, and sense of sin imposed by patriarchal religions, evolved by males made insecure from earliest childhood by a social order based on male intimidation and dominance.

"Might-is-right morality was typical of the linear, hierarchical masculine theology. Feminine morality seems to have been both more subtle and more affirmative, fostering the same spirit of close cooperation that enabled humanity to become civilized in the first place." □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Watch

A Story by Kyle Jarrard

I admit I thought about the Grandy's chicken lady for a long time after that. Then she just faded away, though I do still see her in a dream now and then. Standing there in the humid Waco dawn by the pumps.

Watching me get gas. You can tell right away when they're not right. She had on pink nylon stretch pants and a tight white mohair sweater. But she was about 90 and it had to be at least that hot, too.

I truly hate how they'll come out of the blue like that, right straight up to you. "Is there a Grandy's chicken place around here?"

I was still a little drunk. It was clear she'd walked all the way from somewhere. No telling where though—in off the interstate, all the way from downtown, from the nut house, who knows? I looked to see if she was wearing one of those plastic hospital bracelets.

She wasn't. She was just there, whoever she was, with all her long gray hair down like she was looking for a customer. Just there in those stretch pants and that sweater.

Like an idiot, I said, "Ma'am?"

She came a couple steps closer. I'd finished the fill-up and was turning to put the nozzle back, but without meaning to I turned it toward her, like a gun. This slung some gas on the cement, but she didn't even notice. "Is there a Grandy's chicken place around here?"

That sweater. I knew I had to have either a nut on my hands or some burned-out whore from a stupid place like San Angelo.

I didn't have a lot of time to waste. People'd be showing up back at the apartment any time now. Best to get right to the point.

"Lady, I don't have any idea if there's a Graydy's chicken place around here. Why're you asking me?"

"Grandy's," she corrected.

I slammed the gas nozzle on its hook. "Whatever."

The magic word. No sooner than I'd said it, up she rushed to the passenger side of the Toyota, got in and slammed the door. Can you imagine?

I lost my cool, though. There was just no way someone could just get into your car like that. Old lady or not. What did she take me for? A taxi?

I went over, pulled the door open, got between it and her. "Lady, I ain't taking you to no chicken place. Will you get out of my car, please?"

She had a little satchel of makeup out. The visor was down and she was checking herself out in the mirror. Like we were fixing to go out on a date.

"May I ask what you think you're doing?"

She gave me a look. "Fixing my face." Then she gave me another look. This time it was the way you look at an animal that's been injured, hit on the road, left for dead. She gave me that look and then slowly shook her head. "What'd you do, forget?"

"What?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■

She pointed. "There."

I looked down. I had my pajamas on.

Dickey and Donna are good people, I know that. And I truly am sorry about their boy and all—wait, why am I even saying that? I don't mean like he died. I doubt he did, anyway, the way we whipped their asses. I mean I am sorry about the rest. I am.

They came over to see me a little bit after Christmas and said the boy'd got his orders and had had to go. Would I apartment-sit his place until he got back? I was the nice guy across the street. They always come to me. They always will. Draw them like flies.

I like Dickey and Donna. We go way back. Every time they came to visit their boy we'd all get together on the steps on one side of the street or the other and have a few beers.

We're in the same age-bracket, and all military people. Dick, he did Korea. USAF. Lot of missions over the North he still ain't allowed to talk about and it's been almost 40 years now—something about carrying nuclear bombs, I think.

Donna, she is just a love. Saw Dickey through hell and back all these years since then—clinics and tanks and hospitals all up and down creation. That's the part about war that always forgets to get talked about on the TV.

Of course I said yes to the deal on the boy's apartment. Why not? They acted like they were even going to pay me to do it. I say acted because they only half-hinted. But I didn't push it. Should have, though, needed the money.

They were going to mail in his rent to the owner every month for however long it took him to get back from Saudi. They'd get the utilities, too, just like it was him using the place. They'd already gathered up all the kid's stuff and put it in one room.

I gave back the rent furniture in my place, then the keys and moved my clothes and some little things over. Not a bad setup. I even got to use his Toyota.

I told Dickey and Donna that everything would be just fine, and then they went back North where they live.

I remember saying, "Free rent" that night when I looked out through the screen at my crappy old place across the way. "Can't beat this."

He had a good color TV, so I watched the war and drank beer. Sixty-two years old and as excited as a kid on the Fourth of July. I mean, did you see that triple-A going up that first night? And how about them Tomahawks? One of them reporters holed up in a Baghdad hotel said he'd seen one of them cruise missiles come right by the window, go on down the street like it was looking for something, you know like it was sniffing, then popped through a window into a government building and—Goodbye, Ragheads!

I told the postman—big idiot named Ernie—about them missiles, too. But I don't know, I think maybe it spooked him some because he didn't laugh when I said that someday they are going to be making missiles like the ones on the cartoons, you know the ones that'll come up behind you like on the Road Runners show, tap you on the shoulder and go kerplow! when you turn around to see who's there.

Now I thought that was really funny. But Ernie just stared at me. Oh well, Ernie will never be anything more than just Ernie. The postman on that stupid street in Waco. I don't even know why I'm talking about him. He just doesn't matter.

I watched and watched that war. Ate a lot of junk food, too, which is pretty stupid but then, hell. It *is* my life, two-bit retirement and all. I had a free apartment and a damn color TV that made my old rent set the biggest rip-off in creation. So down went the Doritos

WILLIAM FRANCIS BISBEE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Fritos and sour-cream potato chips while the planes, the thousands of screaming American and British and French fighters, went in on that godawful country and did their parking-lot work. I even made up a joke about how somebody somewhere was going to get smart and figure out how to make a billion dollars off the yellow paint contract for the stripes on the parking lot we were putting in.

I remember thinking how there were some other countries in that neighborhood just asking for it, too. Asking to be miles and miles of nothing but black searing parking lot.

The TV picked up 30-something channels, and since almost all of it was tuned in on the war, there was hardly ever a dull moment. It was like having your hands right on the controls. Once in a while I'd yell out, "Zap those bastards!"

This went on day after day, night after night, until I looked up and realized it'd been several weeks. I'd hardly gone outside and nobody'd come over. Who did I know? Dickey and Donna hadn't called, either. But then why should they have?

Nobody'd come to hassle me about no bills or rent so I figured everything was still on track. Just the same, every two or three days I picked up the receiver to be sure the hum was still there.

I got kind of stupid one night, though, called one of my old honeys (one of the ones before Sharon) who lives up in Arkansas, got a man who quickly informed me that this particular old honey was now Mrs. Something or Other and asked if there was anything else I'd like to know.

This got me mad. I get mad easy, always have. So I told him, yes I had another question and then asked Mr. Something or Other if my old honey still liked to do that special thing she used to beg me on her hands and knees to do to me. Click! I laughed a half-hour straight.

Another night I finally opened the door to the boy's room. Boy? Hell, he's a grown man, 30 something. It wasn't like I was snooping or anything, I just wanted to see what there was to see.

Dickey and Donna had done a good job. Amazing how much stuff they got in there. All around the king bed were boxes taped shut, in places piled up to the ceiling. You couldn't even walk around.

They'd done that to give me more room. They'd given me so much room I didn't know what to do with it all. I mostly lived on the side of the living room where the kitchen and bar were, let the sea of celery green shag stretch away empty.

They'd left me the twin bed in the spare room, the fish to feed in the tank in the hall, and all the angel fish food.

I guess I was on the third little shaker of food for the angel fish when I got sick of the war and waiting and everything else.

I waited until it was cheaper hours one morning, then phoned Dickey up there.

"What are you doing?" I said. That's the way I always do on the phone, just start right in like I was in the room with whoever it is.

"Nothing. Who's this."

"Chi Chi Rodriguez who do you think it is?"

"Chi Chi who? Is that you, Al?"

"How about them boys, huh? Think we're just about to wrap this sucker up. What do you y'all think?"

"You O.K. down there, Al? Honey! Honey, it's Al on the phone."

"Don't trouble her now."

It was Donna then. "Trouble? What trouble."

"No trouble, honey," I said. "Everything's just fine. How are you holding up? Had any word?"

"We're just fine. Doing just fine."

I could hear they were watching television, a Western from the whooping and gunshots. "Had any word?"

"He's fine," she said. "Can't tell us where he is but he says he's O.K. Thank God. Our prayers have been answered. He's doing all right. He's doing fine. That's what he said when he called. Sunday. He called last Sunday."

"I'm glad to hear that. I am."

"How are you doing? Is everything O.K. down there?"

"Just fine, just fine. I just wanted to call. Be sure y'all were all right, holding up and all."

"Dickey, you want to talk to Al?"

There was some whispering. I waited, running the channels with the sound down.

"Al?"

"Yes, Donna."

"Dickey says to say take care. He's doing something. I don't know what."

"O.K. then. I just wanted—"

"You take care, Al. You need anything?"

"Not a thing."

"Goodbye, Al."

"When y'all thinking about coming down?"

She'd already hung up.

I like them a lot. They are such nice people. It may sound crazy but, you know, I felt better after that. I mean I somehow got through the rest of the day easier. With just the thought that, yes, I did have a couple good friends even if they didn't happen to live in the same town or even in the same state.

Damn sure would've been fun to go out to the Star Wheel with them in our checkered shirts and boots like we used to and do a little of that two-step. I know Dickey won't mind me saying that Donna is a real

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looker out on the floor. Gets everybody's eye, rightly so. I don't mean anything by it, but he ain't so bad himself. They're just good people, that's why. That's got to be why. In fact, that's got to be the why of a lot of things.

I had a bad feeling about their son. Couldn't help it.

I was going to say Happy Birthday out loud to myself, since nobody else was going to, finish off my Bud and get on to bed. Instead, I stayed up, all 63 fat-ass years of me, and had another one. In the dark with the TV sound low. That's where the night sort of veered.

Because just as soon as you put four or five beers in me, just as soon as the middle of the night is floating in cool through the screen door and there ain't nobody around here or anywhere else on the planet, I'm going to think about my dead wife Sharon.

You want to know how I picture her? I picture her in a sandtrap with her ball stuck up under the lip of the green. You know, where you can't get it out even if you had all day. I see her doing that, cursing, belly-aching, her pile of red hair sticking out of that big old green billcap and practically on fire.

Did she ever love golf. I'd go around with her in the cart, watch. You won't get a club in my hands, though, no way.

The thing that made her maddest was me getting tickled when she got herself into those impossible situations. This may sound vulgar, but when she got mad, real fired-up mad, I wanted to go up and grab her. I wanted to something bad. That was Sharon. Mrs. Mount Vesuvius. We got along.

I remember going on in the boy's room and getting the clubs out. I remember because those damn angel fish got to darting around when I kicked on the hall light. It was a full set, Spalding, looked new. I stood them up against the dinette table, then scrounged around until I found a roll of masking tape and a marker.

One hundred dollars. No, fifty. I had to be sure someone would take them. Forty-nine ninety-nine. Like a real sale.

That done, I must've thought what the hell—and just kept going. I mean I had to have done that, said that to myself, because I damn sure knew better than to do what I was doing.

But I loved Sharon more than anything in this world. And, damn it, shit like this is the price you have to pay for loving another person for all that time, all those years. Because, in the end, it will always hurt just as much as it felt good. Nothing will ever change that.

Hell, in my opinion, they should've just put all the boy's stuff in one of them storage places. Why'd they need me to sit there and watch it all, those boxes, the celery carpet, the damn TV, damn war, damn world?

There was a grave in Missouri I wanted to go see. I wanted to go stand by it a while. I needed some extra cash to get up there and back. It was not complicated.

Too bad Dickey and Donna never had the chance to meet her. Everything might've—no, everything has its own time to happen. We can't do anything about that.

I remember somewhere along in there, with all the boxes out in the living room and opened up, half of the things priced and ready, I got really mad inside, got the Ajax under the sink and went and shook a whole ton of it on them damn angel fish. The idiots came up to the surface, then hightailed it to the bottom and hid in the plastic shipwreck. Ajax came down like snow, covered the whole slimy bottom of that tank.

I get mad like that, do things even though I'm thinking at the same time that I know better. But, damn it, I get tired of knowing better, get tired of having to stop myself, to say no. I want to say yes, just do it, whatever it is. Some guys get rifles and ammunition and get up on an overpass and let the world have it. I killed them fucking angel fish.

About 5:30 or so I had to get down the coffee and try to get the lead out before it was too late. I'd damn near passed out there in the middle of that carpet pulling things out—a book on baseball, a red cowboy shirt, a tennis trophy, a chipped blue bowling ball, a good iron frying pan with some egg left on it, six gorgeous green wine glasses from Germany, tons of stuff. I mean at anytime I could've just leaned my head back against the chair bottom, dropped the whole deal and slept it off. I could have, but then again it was all kind of beyond me, wasn't it? I had to keep going. The angel fish had sort of made it that way.

They broke in on the Godzilla movie to announce that there was going to be a cease-fire over there. The instant analysts jumped on that like fresh meat, and before you could blink they were all saying the war was over for good. Sure, I can get to acting like a kid, don't we all sometimes. But can you believe I went over and looked out the front door to check and see if he wasn't already driving up? I sometimes wonder about myself.

Of course there was no one there, just a red dog rolling somebody's trash can down the sidewalk in front of my old place. What a nice guy I used to be, I thought, when I was the nice guy across the street.

I blew on my coffee, watched that dog making the awfulest mess, got mad again and went out there. "Get out of that trash you son of a bitch. Get out of here. Go on, get."

I was yelling. Got coffee on my house shoes. And that made me even madder. I took that damn cup and chucked it as hard as I could at that damn dog. Coffee flew all over, but the cup fell way short, bounced on the grass and into some holly bushes. The dog raised its

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

head a second, then jammed his snout right back in the steak bones and baked-potato skins.

It was already getting warm. Which meant I didn't have time to be standing around out there trying to shoo off a dog in somebody else's trash. I dragged everything out of the apartment, set it all up on the 10x10 square of dead Bermuda. I even parked the dying fish out there. It was enough stuff to make a small fortune.

So I began to believe I was going to get to Missouri after all these years and see her grave again. I began to start repeating that to myself, even though at the same time something else in me was starting to say other things. And those other things were pretty clear, like why are you on this tear all of a sudden about going to see your old lady's grave? What do you expect that to accomplish? What are you really running away from? Mightn't it have something to do with the fact that you've got yourself into such a mess you can't even afford a bus ticket to Kirksville and back? Just what is it you want?

"What are you doing?"

I about jumped out of my skin. But it was just the upstairs neighbor, out on his balcony. High school basketball coach, I think. Didn't care, really, what he was.

"Going to have a garage sale."

"At six in the morning?"

I looked down the street at the savings and loan clock. Eighty-one degrees, 6:22. "I'm just getting everything ready while it's still cool."

He didn't say anything, just stared at the stuff. Then he said, "You're selling Randy's things."

"Going to be hot," I said, like I hadn't heard him.

I needed to go gas up the Toyota, have that over with. Then it'd just be a matter of getting through the day, getting together some of my own junk, throwing it in the car and I'd be out of there.

I dug out the keys. "Got to get some gas. Keep an eye on it, will you? Take me five minutes."

"Sure. I can do that. He say you could sell his stuff?"

"Needs some money over there in Saudi. Be right back."

"Don't they pay him over there?"

"Who the hell knows what our government does," I said.

He appeared to think about that. Then he said, "Well, that's right."

"Be right back."

It was Saturday morning. Only the beer and bread trucks were out. I wondered if he would figure something was wrong and call the cops. Then I thought, Why the hell would he do that? It was just my old paranoia again.

In my pajamas at the gas station. What the hell was I doing? I don't think I had any earthly idea what I was doing. Sure, I was on a tear about Sharon, but what was I doing with this old lady?

Looking back, I know these things just happen, that there isn't anything anybody can do about it. The steps have to be taken, that's all, because whatever it is up there or out there, it's got each and everyone of us on a rope like a cow.

I paid for the gas and drove her to the nearest Grandy's chicken place.

"Closed," I announced.

"I can see that," she said.

"Opens up at 10, sign says."

"This one always opens at 9:50."

I had a pro on my hands. "You could've walked from the station. Only three blocks."

"Nine-fifty, sometimes 9:45," she said. Her light little head vibrated like a lamp shade when you bump it.

"Well," I said. I was hinting for her to get out. "Well."

She looked straight out over the hood at the glass door and the *Closed* sign hanging there. The lot was empty.

She said: "They're very clean. Some of the other places are not clean. Here, they are."

"Well," I said.

She smiled, without turning. "And polite. Very polite. No rudeness such as you can encounter."

That was neither here nor there to me. I grunted. "Well, what's it going to be?"

"Oh. I always get the box of 10 Golden Nuggets. That's the best. And a bargain. I get a cokecola with it as well."

"No, I mean do you want me to leave you here, drop you someplace else, or what? It's only 7:20. You ain't going to wait that long are you?"

"We can wait."

"I have to go. I can't wait."

"Of course you can. Don't be silly."

"Lady, I—"

"Arlene."

"Oh. O.K., Arlene, look—"

"Tell me your name, too. Don't be rude."

"What?"

"Your name. Tell me your name." This time she glanced at me.

"Al," I half-shouted. Then I turned the car back on. "You're going to have to get out. I have to go. If you don't mind?"

"I don't mind at all," she said.

"Well, then, fine," I said.

I don't know, but this kind of froze her. She seemed to suddenly be smaller, as if she'd drawn herself in. I felt bad, but then, damn it, you can't just let these people take you over.

"It ain't that long to wait," I said quietly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■

There was a perfectly good bench by the kiddie playground.

"Look, there's shade on that bench there, see? I just can't wait with you here. Do you understand? Hey."

The head stopped vibrating, settled back. I'd killed her.

Just like that. I can't describe the chill that blew through me. I'd never seen anybody die, not in real life. And there she'd died, right there in the Toyota, right there next to me. Got in the car at the gas station, forced me to take her to a goddamn Grandy's and up and died in the parking lot.

It was like she'd picked me out to die on. Like she knew she was fixing to check out or something. Maybe she'd just wanted to be with somebody, anybody, and I just happened to be the one. But I didn't believe what my head was telling me. This kind of crap only happened in the movies. This was me. Right there on the Grandy's parking lot. Maybe I even killed her by carrying on, telling her to get out. Maybe I'd scared her to death.

The air-conditioning air was stinking funny. I needed some real air, and began punching the electric-window buttons. Hers flew down, then I sort of panicked and shot it back up. I got the back ones down, and so that helped some. But there wasn't much real air around. It was as if it'd all been sucked away, leaving some sort of invisible flame, even though that doesn't make any sense. I busted out sweating.

Now what? What was I supposed to do now? Where do you go? To the police station. Not half-drunk and in pajamas, you don't. To the hospital. But questions there, too. No, I had to go get dressed. Go on back to the apartment, get my clothes on first.

But could I just drive off? With a dead lady like this? Would that be a crime, moving a dead person? This was crazy. Somebody would see. Would see what I was doing and jump up and point, "Hey, look there! That guy is driving around with a dead lady in his car! Stop him, stop him! I bet he killed her! Hey, you, stop!"

I looked at her, tried to calm down. She didn't look dead yet. Of course not. Just sleeping, sleeping there in the Toyota next to me. Like somebody's mother. The hands were holding her purse on her lap.

But the V-neck sweater was sagging down disgracefully. I took a look around to be sure no one was watching, then reached over and pulled it up some to hide things.

Then I felt sick to my stomach. I was sure someone was looking out from inside the restaurant. Some kid there early cutting up fryers on the band saw in the cold box coming out for a warm-up. But I didn't look to see. I never have been able to look and see in situations like that. Never.

I pulled out of there. I took it slow. All the way. I kept thinking the body's going to pitch over on the dash. But she had her shoulder harness on. I watched for cops, took it easy, very very easy.

I parked across the street from the apartment and stayed there a moment to try and figure out if anybody would be able to look over and tell she was dead. There was already a family of wetbacks looking around at the sale. A grandmother was testing the recliner, getting the kids to crank her back. It was going to be all right. Nobody was paying the least attention.

And they ignored me as I came up the sidewalk, except for a little girl who giggled and said something about my pj's. The upstairs guy was nowhere to be seen. I went on inside like it was nothing, like it was somebody else in the complex who was having a sale.

I had a flash as I opened the door that there they'd be—Donna and Dickey, and their boy back from the war. There they'd be standing around with their arms crossed, waiting for me to show up and explain why all the stuff was out in the yard with a price on it. And me in my pajamas and a dead old lady in the Toyota.

I got dressed. Then I got a paper sack from the pantry, stuck my toiletries and some clothes in it, folded the top shut.

I left all the keys on the bar. The watch was over.

Pulling the door to, I scanned the customers. Nobody I knew. People were just shuffling around, leaning over a little to check a price or turn a knob.

I went to the side so I could see if the neighbor was on his balcony again. There was a woman inside up there who yelled *ouch* two or three times, and so they were busy.

"This your sale?" a kid on a banana bike yelled at me. "What you want for that aquarium. Ain't got no price on it. Give you five dollars."

"Not my sale," I whispered.

Couple other people looked around. "This your sale?"

I shook my finger no.

"Well, whose is it?" said the kid.

I just looked at him. I wanted to slap the hell out of him. But then that'd mess everything up. For once, I controlled myself.

"Hey," he cried, "maybe it's all free! You think so? Huh?"

I turned east down the sidewalk. It was only a few blocks to the interstate. In two or three days I'd be in Kirksville, and the Grandy's chicken lady'd be laid to rest. I wondered if she had any kin or somebody who'd show up. Or if the city'd end up having to do it. They probably would.

But that really wasn't any of my business now. That's right. You just walk away. □

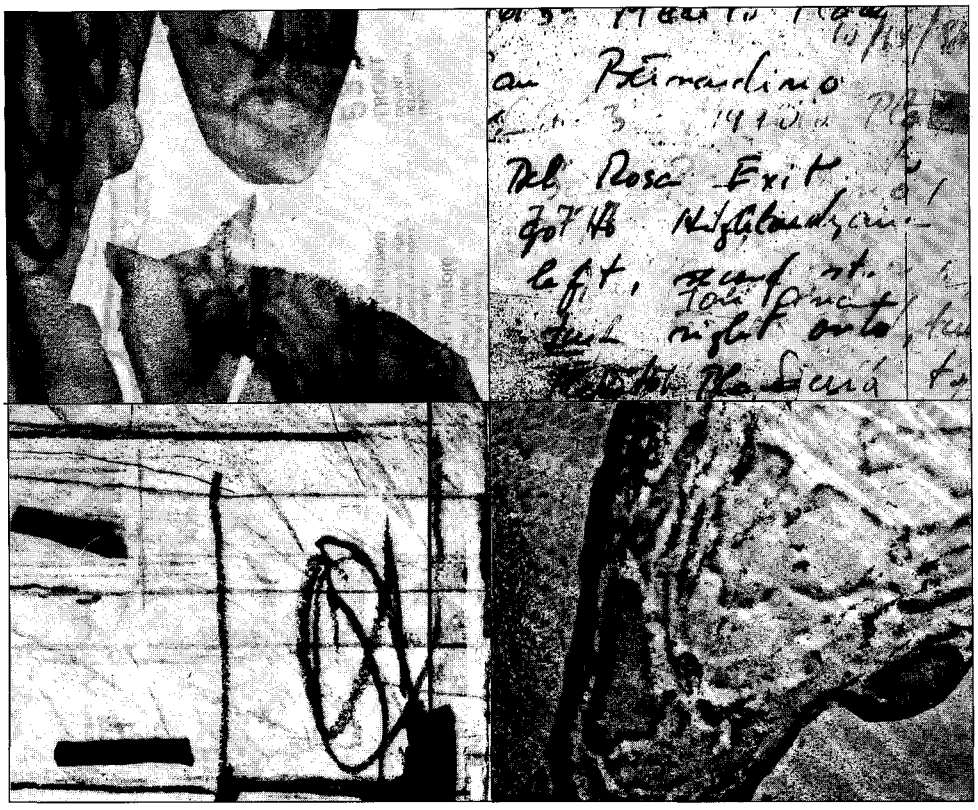
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TODD SMITH

At the Highway 41 Drive-In Theater

It's Saturday night again, two movies so bad
he can barely keep his brain from winking out
between the two, walking his son down a dark
gauntlet of teenage cars to the cinderblock hut
for a pee and another popcorn. While he leans
against the wall marked MEN, his son steps up
to the plastic trough. A silence, during which
the boredom-weight of now ticks in his chest:
he coughs and squints into the moth-pale screen,
projecting there, in reverse, his life.
A dad
in the first scene, he watches himself grow bold
as, slowly, his son grows smaller and his wife
a bit more satisfied; then they untie the knot,
they meet, their paths uncross, the girl he thinks
he loves is seventeen, and his first mistakes
unmake themselves. When "Ernest Goes to Camp"
blurs on, the present jerks him back to a place
where, unless it's raining, everyone pays, parks
and waits for dusk, where his only son zips up:
"I couldn't go."
It's Saturday night; the slow
walk back through a maze of giddy boys is lit
by the long glow of the movie, slanting high
above them, out of reach. He can't quite see
how the mayflies, all wings and thin leg-wires,
already old since leaving their pupae-skins
in the quarry lake three hours ago, can loop
and scrawl their furious signatures across
this light, spellbound and solo, as the plot
hackneys to an end: the girl is won and lost
and won again, and their lives are half gone.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



ROMOLAND

from the pictonovel
by Judith Palmer & Ben Stoltzfus

ROMOLAND is a postmodern collaboration between Judith Palmer, a feminist artist, and Ben Stoltzfus, a literary critic and novelist. The written text uses 35 of Ms. Palmer's photoetchings and drawings as generative surfaces for a series of meditations and imaginary dialogues between a man and a woman. They dramatize the condition of being a woman in a world dominated by men. The prints and the text explore the subordination of women and their liberation through language—the formal language of art on the one hand and the playful dismantling of cultural codes on the other. Both texts foreground the voice of the Other as it manifests itself in the traces, the lines, and the cracks of speech, be they visual or verbal. The arabesques of her sensibilities oppose the squares of his authority. Her art speaks and his text sees. By looking and listening the reader witnesses the unveiling of a new body, the space in between the pictures and the written texts wherein reign bliss and equality. ROMOLAND is a blend of metafiction, abstract art, and figurative language.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Body of the Text

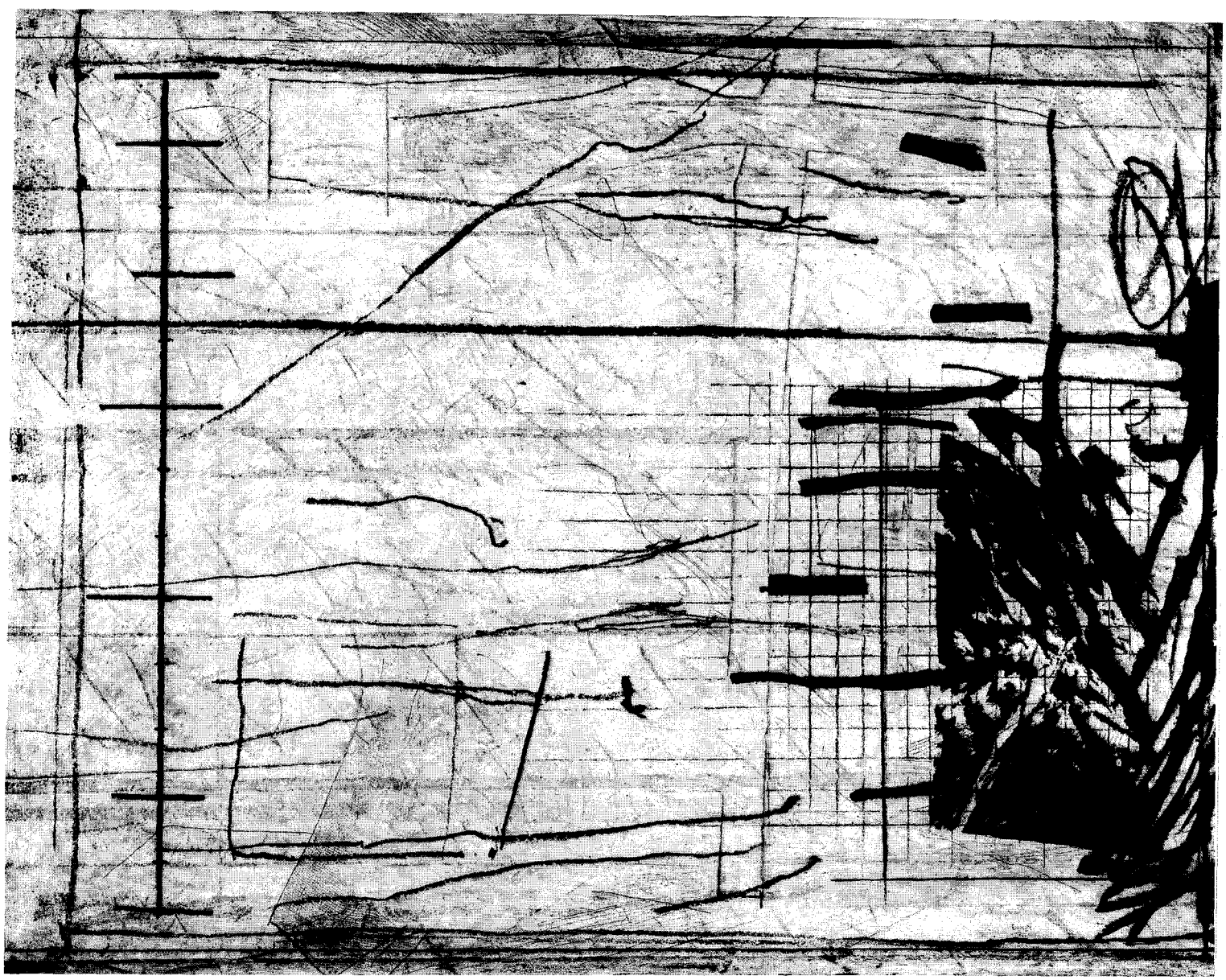
These creatures of the night accompany her everywhere. They are the hounds of consolation, her faithful consorts and her abiding shame. She is under house arrest, but her sentence has been commuted, naturally, until her confinement expires. She shows no signs of flight or resistance. Her arms are up, her palms are open, her fingers outstretched, and her body motionless. Her pets are the descendants of Anubis, hangdogs of the Nile, exiles like her from the green shores, the graceful palms, and those rhythmic seasonal floods.

She is a stranger imprinted on the desert sands of his chronology. She stands, an indelible yet alienated presence, framed by nature and his insistent angles. She neither speaks nor calls but there is purpose in her selection of a dress pattern for dolls, in photographing it, and etching it on zinc. She carves the vegetation of the upper and lower panels. Her intuition inks the wooden frames and silhouettes and presses them onto the printed pattern. She places the design of the wood relief face up on a table and the paper face down on top. Finally and willfully she rubs the backside of the paper with her hand and the handle of a stylus.

Her woodblocks are her language, her strength, her frenzy, and her freedom. They represent her mark on the yellow-ochre sands of time. She is her art and her art is her, a voice pattern. Time may be his but these prints are her space. They are now her very own space-time. They display her will, her force, her asymmetrical essence. They are her speech and her sentence. They belong.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fugue Nine

She feels like a fugitive, a runaway slave, a deserter. She no longer wants to belong to him. She has decided to remove herself from his control. Cunt-role is what she wants. Independence. A reprieve from servitude. No. Reprieve is a temporary condition and she wants permanence. A permanent dissolution of her bondage. She wants to break the fetters of his system—the rhetoric that has locked her into male syntax. A sin tax. She is being punished for some distant mythic transgression. She wants out. The grammar of his beliefs is a historical graph that has imprisoned her. It always charts the same course. His drawing exhibits the selfsame relationship. It is a plot, a function of coordinates that always keep her down. But it's showing signs of stress. The small squares are under siege. Her dark continent threatens the flag of his assurance. The squares and stripes of his land must accommodate, will have to adapt to the circles, ellipses, squiggles, and tendrils of her desire.

Something is about to change. She can feel it. Any graphologist will recognize the tension in the lines, the ruptures in the logic of continuity: thin lines, short fat lines, gray zones, scribbles, and meanderings that scoff at the stability of vertical and horizontal axes. It's a tedious process but dismantling his rulings and erasing his indelible certitudes must precede the reinvention of the alphabet. He will not change unless the letters of his thinking are altered, unless the circuits of his reasoning are deleted and reprogrammed.

How to proceed and where to go? There must be room somewhere for wayward women, for displaced persons, for refugees in search of space. There has to be a place—a Romoland the dispossessed can call their own.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Romoland

He wants to buy a travel trailer. Every morning at breakfast he reads the "for sale" ads in the newspaper, cuts them out, and pastes them onto white sheets of paper—two ads per page, with enough room beneath each one for notes. He dials numbers, speaks with owners, asks questions, writes down the answers: price, size, length, year, appliances, bath, number of bunks, address, and directions. Each question and answer elicits something useful about the trailer and its location. The men understand each other. They speak the same language. In due course, after many calls, he gets into the car, follows directions to the owner's house. They negotiate. After several trips, he finds what he wants, pays the price, and takes possession.

It's a neat little story. Have trailer will travel. Nothing earth-shattering but it has a beginning, middle, and end, like all good stories; with enough suspense to lend credence to the episode and make the reader curious. Is there a trailer out there? Will he find one? Will he bargain smartly and will he be able to afford it? Is the seller a crook or will he describe the virtues of the trailer honestly? Will he use his beautiful raven-haired daughter to seduce (figuratively speaking, of course) the buyer into paying more than it's worth? These are legitimate questions. All you have to add is specific detail, flesh out the characters, give them names, a street, a city, a place of their own, generate conflict, inflict obstacles, fuel desire and a wish-list of this and that, add a pinch of complication, a dash of sex, love on demand, the threat of failure, and at the end, success. Voilà, a story, something for the magazines. Mail-order realism. Very comfortable. Nothing threatening. Nothing to upset the public, disturb its priorities. Sit back and enjoy.

She reads his story but he has changed it in favor of trailer mayhem in one of our national parks, a veritable chain-saw massacre between the loggers and the conservationists. Violence at its best. Blood everywhere. Severed limbs. A forest fire. Spotted owls. Dozer in the ditch. Rape. The FBI. A national scandal. Just think of it. All that from several innocent newspaper ads.

Nothing is innocent, she says. Not even newspaper ads. Particularly newspaper ads.

He takes the Del Rosa exit onto Highland Avenue, turns left, then right at the second intersection, and there she is beckoning to him from the open door of the trailer. It's the nineteen-year-old: sultry, black-haired, and blue-eyed. No, on second thought, it's not the dark-haired wench, it's the blonde in Lake Elsinore. He takes the Corona freeway, 15 miles to the Lake Street exit. Her name is Gayle and she lives at 16 806 Pierce Street. "Just so you get here on Monday afternoon before . . ." Her voice trails off into the receiver. She mumbles a time, something about six thirty, but it is unintelligible. Did she say "dirty sex?"

This is dumb, he says. You can't write a story like this. Nothing makes sense. The directions are illegible, the red set contradicts the blue set, and you can't read the newspaper print. The simultaneity is disconcerting and the discontinuity is irritating. It goes nowhere. It's an exercise in contradiction. I want a story and all you give me are pieces, fragments of this-and-that without rhyme or reason. I'd never be able to buy a trailer using these directions. Besides, where's Romoland?

She says: Fortunately, you already have a trailer.

He says: Where did you find my notes?

In the waste-paper basket.

What's the point? I had thrown them away!

That's the point.

No.

Yes.

This is crazy.

Would you like to know why I retrieved them?

I'm not sure I do.

I'll tell you anyway. It's like this. She describes the purpose and process of her contrivance. She takes his words, his message, and his meaning, she says, and she deforms them. She can do this, she says. It's not against the law. It's a free country. She's free, she says, free to invent new space, new angles, new relationships, new solutions. Handwriting is an intimate thing, right? Take a woman's diary. It's the most private form there is, and when you see it exposed you say to yourself, aha, secrets, veiled pleasures, fears, longings, expectations. And what do you get? A freezer, an awning, propane cylinders. It's a big deception. You wanted intimacy but you get only surface impressions, a few colors, and blurred newsprint.

He says it's all nonsense and he wishes she had left well enough alone. She says that's what they all say, the defenders of tradition. He says tradition is good, stability is a virtue. She says you can't keep redoing the past, it's boring. He says if we forget the past we're bound to repeat its mistakes. She says history has only one gender, his, and her part is missing. He says women always say they have a part missing. She says he's a Freudian phallocrat. He says women always want what men have. They're depraved because they're deprived.

You would be too, she says, if you'd been treated like a second class citizen.

You're not second class, he says.

Why is it that I *feel* second class?

Because women have no brains.

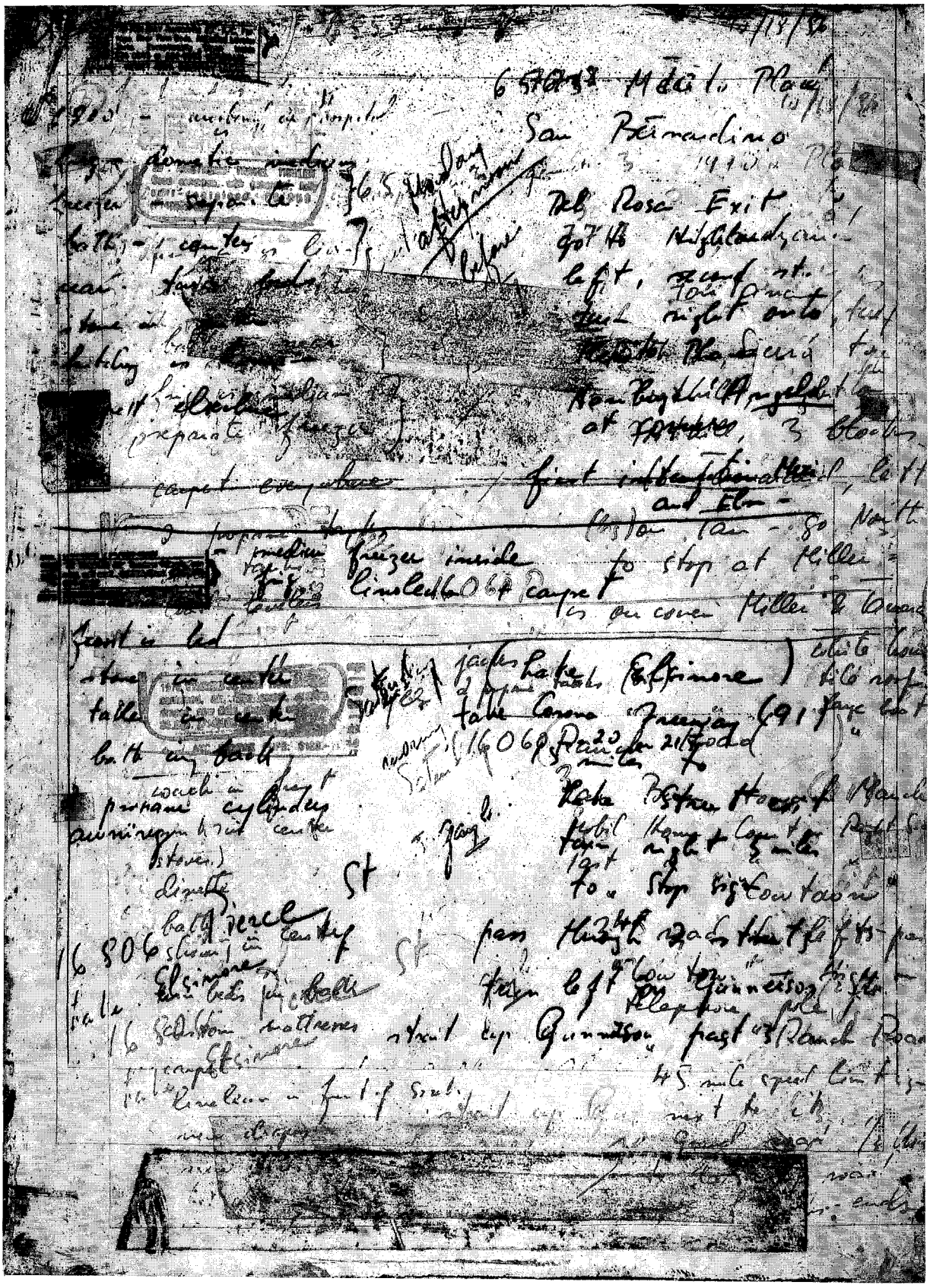
You mean they have no penis with which to think.

They're not communicating. She feels at an impasse, as though language were failing them both. That's why

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■

she does what she does. In her art. She wants to form a bridge between his world and hers. Between his certitudes and her expectations, between used language and the language of her prints. She wants to remake words, to foreground the gaps and the silence. She wants him to hear the texture of opposition, to sense the force of her line, and the shape of dialogue. She wants him to see the difference, to feel the pull, to experience the Other, to understand her space. She wants him to change. . . . She is dreaming.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■

She wakes up a centipede, a worm, a lowly creature. How did this happen? No self-esteem. Buffeted by his whims, coerced by his rules, whipped by his desires. How is this possible? Why would he want it this way? However it happened, enough is enough. Better dead than bled. She gathers her legs beneath her, girds her loins with determination, and sets forth. Anywhere out of the valley. His rod and his staff will comfort her no more. Even if he should follow her all the rest of her days, he must not rule. She will persist: mother, daughter, father, family, and clan. She can be all and know all, and she will find a place of her own, a land of zinnias, columbine, and honeysuckle. No . . . a CEO on the corporate ladder. No glass ceiling for her. Not any more. His time will not be her time, nor will his work regulate her endeavor. At last she will bask in the glory of her gender, in a world of her design, and warmth and gladness will prevail.

I am particularly fond of Fugue Ten, she says. He looks doubtful.

It's nothing but smudges.

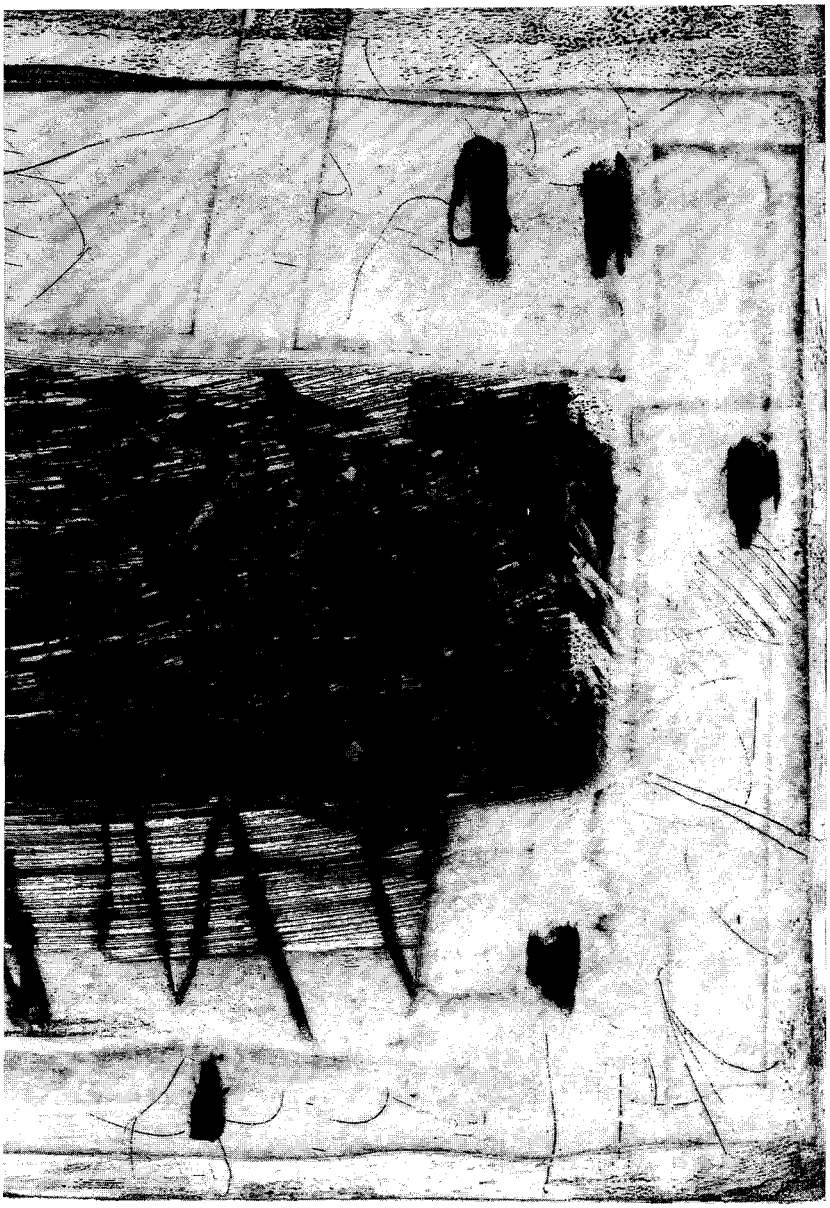
No it's not. It has purpose and meaning.

Could have fooled me.

That's why we have so many fools. She bites her tongue. This is no way to proceed. It will get them nowhere. She begins again. Think of it as force vectors. Nothing specific. Marks of ener-

FU(

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



IE TEN

gy. Something contained, beyond tolerance.

The straight lines hold her in place but the confinement cannot last. A dozen avant-garde smudges have already escaped. They are the oil-crayon marks on the transparency, fingerprints, badges of identity that radiate thin personal trails. The black line of his rule, the one on top, has already been challenged by her elongated zigzag. His voice fades into the delicate traces of tape, whereas her strokes energize the center with a thick, active, and determined flurry.

A Gregor Samsa in reverse. A resurrected dung beetle. A centipede on the march. Legs churning, challenging the Law. Asserting themselves against bureaucracy, complacency, the peremptory. Against the quicksand of lies, deceit, and self-interest. The father will not endure. His conceit cannot last. The energy of her lines will radiate beyond the core, will form new spaces of independence—organisms generating force fields beyond detention. The lines of communication between the inside and the outside are still evolving. A new lineage will trace different patterns, imprint them on the mind, organize unexpected structures that will be enabling elements of liberation. She feels gleeful, uninhibited, and free. At last, a metamorphosis.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INSCRIPTION 3

This body is her proof and this text which is also a body is his discourse. Both bodies are on stage where he explores her language even as she repudiates his, or tries to. Moreover, there is no dialogue without drama and their performance, together, is an art form.

His writing apprehends her body joyfully, whereas her examination of his body is perhaps more clinical than passionate. His art, despite her reticence, is now in touch with her openings and, as the subject of this f(r)iction, s/he revolves in search of inscribable and indescribable bodies.

His writing is a supplement in motion, both male and female, inconsistent, undecidable, nonidentical, whereas her inscription must write the body in between the inside and the outside, as well as the membrane that is vow and fissure.

We, however, have turned our backs on them. We have lashed their bodies with modesty. We are no longer in touch. We hide behind the vestments of culture. We have, in fact, repudiated ourselves.

When will we reinvent the space between her text and his? When will that opening be ours? When can we appropriate all three and clothe them in transparencies that unveil? In tempting and invaginating folds. The garment's gap is the erotic zone of place and text and its meaning is both present and absent. She looks for a motherland but finds only fatherland. She is dispossessed. Her drama is to play the role of the invisible, historical dummy but her new script has Moses watering the tree of good and evil. Eve is the apple of his eye. In this scenario space is reversible, time is circular, and the senses bubble effervescently. Now and then we grasp the quick of things, we touch the in-between, we receive, we penetrate, we come.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JAY LADIN

Translating Ecclesiastes

Atop the topmost vertebra of the spine
that was a tree, the squirrel shrieks,
enraged, I think, by the magnitude of forgetting

the forest has achieved. The squirrel
and I agree. All this death does matter,
even if it happens every season

and half a year brings resurrection.
As Nietzsche noted, either
the circle is a vicious god, or God

is a vicious circle, suggesting
(and this the squirrel can't accept)
that if the end devours the beginning,

the beginning must swallow the end. Thrashing
his dilated tail he hisses, then in a leap
evades all consolation, continuing his bitter patter

in another skeleton. The leafless trees
expose him for what he is: a worried mammal
with busy hands, a dealer in fallen fruits.

What can I offer him?
Like a cloud of starlings spiraling
God-the-circle keeps on turning

while Earth spins in the opposite direction,
the contrary motions meshing
like gears in some perverse contraption

that imposes consciousness on atoms
then erases the results it gets.
The squirrel climbs higher

until he's hunched against the heavens.
In April, when we meet again,
he'll still be clenched like a soft grey fist

against the buds and building nests,
one of the enemies of living,
one of the witnesses.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SHAFT MEN

A Story by George Dila

When we reached the Jordan River it was the middle of the night, the guys were beat, and grumbling about the forced march, but as Shem says to me, orders is orders.

Joshua, the fanatic that he is, has to control every last detail, the rest of us are jackasses, everybody from his lieutenants on down to the lowest shaft men like me and Shem and Dov and Rube. A bunch of incompetents who couldn't lace their own sandals in the dark. So he's going around with that voice of his, like a lion's roar, stomping, dust flying, civilians in that valley over there, troops here, pointing with his sword, command post by the river, sleeping tents on that hill, meeting tents by those trees, spittle flying as he roars, chariots over there, where Cookie's supposed to set up the chow tent, and so forth. And most of us just want to drop where we are and sleep, but latrines must be dug first, Joshua's orders.

Finally he's satisfied that the camp's the way he wants it. Everything's always the way he wants it, but of course he says it's the way Yahweh wants it, and Dov says how can you argue with that?

The next morning Shem says they're raising a special tent in the middle of camp, and a priest passes me, I am sitting, polishing my shaft, my name burned into it near the handle, sharpening the point with my stone, and the priest winks, like he knows something I don't, and another priest on his way to the special tent smirks, and Shem says, I don't like this at all. Not one bit.

All the men are lined up, twenty lines going into the tent, we're well back, but I hear screaming and wailing from the tent, and then the word comes, the priests are cutting the skin off the end of our most private part, Rube says like Moses did to all the men, back, what? oh, forty or fifty years. Shem says to me, we are going to be lesser shaft men when we come out of the tent, that is Shem's humor. I can't believe how Dov squalls like a baby when it's his turn. I just grit my teeth and only grunt once, but tears do come to my eyes, I can't help that. It takes four weeks to heal. There is nothing for us to do but polish our shafts and practice thrusts and blocks, and every time I go to the latrine to do my water I cannot believe what I hold in my hand.

Word comes that we will take Jericho, across the Jordan. Training begins. Shem, Dov, Rube and I make up one rank of shaft men, going into battle elbow to elbow, shafts in ready position. We have never been in battle before.

We practice shafting drills. Death to Canaanites! Die Canaanite! Canaanite Dog! These are some of the curses we are encouraged to yell as we charge and drive our shafts into the straw dummy Canaanites. For Yahweh! For the promised land! Remember Egypt!

At the campfire the night before we are to move across the river, Rube tells me he is afraid. Shem tells me he is ready to kill Canaanites. Dov tells me he may try some of that Canaanite pussy. Be careful of disease, I tell him.

It has been a dry summer, the river low. We move across in ranks of four, led by the priests carrying the ark, then priests with horns, then archers, then swordsmen, then shaft men, then utility men. Fifty thousand strong.

On the horizon Jericho is a small brown blur, changing shape in the heat waves that rise off the blistered plain. We march towards it. We will do Yahweh's great work beneath a good blue sky. We sing. Yahweh is great. Yahweh is powerful. The Canaanites must cower in their sandals watching our great army advance upon them. They fear us. They fear Yahweh. And when they hear us singing, their terror will grow. We are confident of victory.

As we march, Jericho grows, and when we reach it, it is like a mountain in our path.

Holy shit, Rube says, staring up at the wall, his eyes big as water pots.

Our squad leader, Jeb, gives our rank a dirty look. Shut your hole, Dov tells Rube.

We march all the way around the city, singing, and the sound of each step, fifty thousand sandals hitting the ground at once, brings awe even to me. When we complete the march the horns blare, it is a mighty sound. We are a mighty army, and I hope the Canaanites are as convinced as I am.

We set up camp an arrow's flight from the wall. Shem guesses that Joshua and his lieutenants are sizing things up, figuring out how for the love of Abraham we are going to get into the city to sack it. For Yahweh.

The next morning we form up and march around Jericho again. Our feet thud, we sing, the horns blare. We return to camp. Do not question authority, Jeb tells us. There is a plan.

The next day we march around the city again, and the next day, and the next, and the next. The spring is gone from our step, the gusto from our voices. Shem asks, How many officers does it take to lead an ass? I cannot repeat his answer.

On the sixth night the buzz around the campfire is that Joshua is in a foul mood.

It is still dark when we are roused from our warm beds the next morning. We form up in the quavering light of a thousand torches. Something will happen today, Dov whispers. Yes, I agree. It will happen today.

We begin the march with our shafts held straighter, our heads higher. As we march the sky lightens over the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■

distant hills, then the sun comes quickly and for a few moments the wall of Jericho is blood red. When we complete one circle of the city we do not go back to camp but continue marching. By the time the sun is overhead we have marched around the city three times and the men are taking long pulls at their water skins. Bugger a camel, Shem mutters. That's a tight plan, Rube gives back grimly. By the fifth circling of the city men are stumbling, collapsing in the dust. We pass nearly a hundred who have been dragged to the side and left, like old, useless dogs. We continue marching. By the seventh circling of the city the butt end of my shaft drags the ground. My goat skin bottle, nearly empty, thumps against my belly. Madness, Shem mutters. Madness.

Then word comes down the line. Joshua wants louder singing. Great idea, says Shem, rolling his eyes. That'll do the trick, says Dov. Shut your hole, says our squad leader, Jeb. We sing louder, angry, and now, from the front of the march, the horns begin a continuous blasting, furious, relentless blasting. And now, new word comes down the line. Begin shouting. Shout without ceasing. Shout louder than you have ever shouted before. We are creating a terrible din, we are working ourselves into a fury, and suddenly the ranks begin to move faster, and then faster still, and soon we are circling the wall at a dead run, shouting, feet thudding, horns blaring, and as we round the curve of the wall we see that the city's main gate is open and our army is pouring through. Half the army must be inside by the time we reach the gate and we thunder through, trying to stay in our rank of four, and we are shouting Death, Death to Canaanites, Canaanite Dogs!

Our army has scattered into every sector of the city. There are fires everywhere, there are shouts of victory and screams of death, and the smell of blood and fear. Every street, every building, every house must be entered, destroyed, every person killed, every possession burned, Yahweh has commanded it. Our squad pounds down a narrow street following our leader, there are small houses close on both sides, but no Canaanites, not a soul, and our leader yells, Inside! Inside! and Dov and I rush through an open door, looking for the enemy. There is no one in the first room. Dov and I stop, breathing hard. We listen. Then he makes a gesture with his head, telling me to go through one door, he will go through the other. I nod agreement. I lift my shaft to ready position. As I advance towards the door I slowly turn the weapon in my hands until I can see my name, Samuel, etched by fire. I enter the small room, look, then turn and come back out, my shaft clean. Dov is coming back from his room. No one, he says. No one, I say. Shit! says Dov.

We return to the smoky street. My eyes smart, my throat is tight, my mouth gritty. I can still see, as if the image is real, the four people huddled in the corner of the room I had entered, their faces turned towards me in terror, their eyes wide. The old man, toothless, his skin as brown and withered as an olive leaf on the winter ground. The mother, her lips moving quickly in silent speech, holding a shaking boy against her, her hand clamped across his mouth. The girl, soft as ripe fruit, reaching forward, offering in her sweet palm a ring of hammered gold. I will never forget them, the Canaanite dogs.

Reports that the wall of Jericho fell down are untrue, impossible, as you'd know if you ever saw that wall. The truth is that the gates had been opened from the inside by Joshua's spies.

We left Jericho and kept fighting, laying waste the cities, taking what was ours, what was promised, and here are the Kings we defeated, and their people, who were either Hittites or Amorites or Canaanites or Perizzites or Hivites or Jebusites.

The King of Jericho
The King of Ai, near Bethel
The King of Jerusalem
The King of Hebron
The King of Jarmuth
The King of Lachish
The King of Eglon
The King of Gezer
The King of Debir
The King of Geder
The King of Hormah
The King of Arad
The King of Libnah
The King of Adullam
The King of Makkedah
The King of Bethel
The King of Tappu-ah
The King of Hepher
The King of Aphek
The King of Lasharon
The King of Madon
The King of Hazor
The King of Shimron-miron
The King of Achshaph
The King of Tannach
The King of Megiddo
The King of Kedesh
The King of Jokne-am
The King of Dor
The King of Goriim in Gilgal
The King of Tirzah

I became a squad leader, and then a troop leader. A leader of shaft men. The notches on my shaft, for all those I've killed, are too numerous to count. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MICHAEL WATERS

New Age

For J

The Sunday I blew sixty dollars on a taxi
just to break away from you,
the New Age driver, eyeing me—wild-haired, reeking sex—
turned Mr. Solicitous,
asking me to "share" (the name of that skinny actress)
the deep source of my distress.
No. Blessed silence. "Relationship," he flashed turquoise.
I ached to yank his hooped hair.
("Under every ponytail," my father once told me
—big grin—"there's a horse's ass.")
"I knew a woman once," he twirled the stud in one lobe.
"We fought like blind billy goats.
If they can't accept you for what you are . . ." he trailed off,
such vast wisdom too weighty
to articulate fully as we throttled along
the wavering interstate.
At Tweed-New Haven, I fumbled him three twenties, slapped
thirty-five on the counter
to revise my Super Saver, then slumped on a graf-
fitied bench. Soon I grew calm.
Three hours till the next flight home. The vacant terminal
commenced its tidy business.
A pay phone shrilled, Car Rental answered, then hustled off.
Maintenance swept by, puzzled

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■

the swaying receiver, hung up. Ramon—red name stitched
on oil-spattered coveralls—
slow-poked over sip by sip, careful not to wobble
his styrofoam cup—the steam
stubbling his chin with thin ranks of angelic orders—
gazed along the uniform
bank of phones, then shrugged away. Somewhere evolution
had begun its sharp descent.
I hefted my romance, tattered *Pan* by Knut Hamsun:

> *'I am depressed and full of sad thoughts tonight,' I say.*
> *And in her sympathy she makes no answer.*
> *'I love three things,' I say then. 'I love a dream of love I once had, I love you, and I love this patch of earth.'*
> *'And which do you love best?'*
> *'The dream.'*

The dream. Ninety-five bucks. Hmm.
I sifted some coins, dialed, asked you please to come get me.
How many unnameable
passions must we ruin till we hurt each other enough?
How many grievances mouth
till the splintery soul flames beyond resurrection?
Let the ambiguities
of fiction conspire complex answers. All you required,
love, was a little change.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■

PHOTOGRAPHS

A Story by Kevin Casey

When Stoner discovered that his mother was removing photographs from old family albums, he felt an immediate sense of loss, as if memories, images, particularities of place were being taken from him. The empty spaces on the pages, dark rectangles that had once been covered by examples of his father's artless photography, were like tombstones. Some evoked almost total recall; others were anonymous, as if their inscriptions had been worn away by time and weather.

There was no evident logic behind the selection of the photographs that were missing. Of those that Stoner could remember, some dated back to his mother's early years. They showed the house in the middle of the fields in which she had been young, her overweight sister, her mother dressed in black, her graduation day. Others had been taken on golf courses, on promenades or in front of modest hotels. In one of the later albums, in what seemed like an act of aggression, an assault on his past, she had torn out ten or twelve photographs of Stoner and his brother. Some of these had been taken in their back garden but most dated from a summer holiday and showed the two boys on a beach. Stoner, at eight or nine years of age, had been fair-haired and very thin, his ribs evident and startling as in some anatomical illustration. His brother had been sturdier and, in various stances, more obdurate, the focal point of the photographs .

Stoner's mother was ninety-two years old, an almost embarrassing age. She lived in the mews of her elder son's house, surrounded by items of ill-matching furniture that had once belonged in the family home. When Stoner visited her, some piece of the past always thrust itself on his attention; the dining-room table at which he had eaten so many meals, the piano on which he had practiced, a particular chair. These associations were not always positive. The objects occasionally prompted feelings of unease, as if they were joined by lines of tectonic stress to tremors in his childhood.

Sometimes, during evening visits, before the lamps were switched on, the room became blurred in grey light and his mother's face softened as if she were the much younger woman who stared out from the earliest album. It was like a return to a past that he had never known, his mother as a single woman, getting ready to play golf or to go for a drive in the country, flirtatious in her silences. They would sit there with little to say to each other that had not already been said; she relied on repetition. A clock that had ticked through the years of his childhood ticked through these moments of monotony. Outside, past the entrance gate and across the road, the sea stirred against a breakwater, shifting stones.

"Do you realize that there are photographs missing from these albums?" he asked her one afternoon.

"What?"

He repeated the question, observing, with irritation, that she could hear him quite easily when she wanted to do so.

"I don't know where they've gone," she said, in a slightly accusing tone as if she suspected him of having removed them.

"You didn't give them to anyone?"

"What?"

"You didn't give them to anyone?"

"Who would I give them to?"

The reply had an apparent logic that was difficult to refute. She had outlived most of the people who might have been interested in even seeing the photographs.

His brother had no doubt about what had happened.

"She tears things up. She's always tearing things up. There's nothing else that could have happened to them."

"There's no one to give them to," his mother said emphatically. "Anyway, I like to have them. I was looking at them the other day. There are some photographs of people that I didn't even recognize. I don't know what your father was thinking of when he took them in the first place."

Stoner drank tea from a large china cup that had once belonged to his great-grandmother. The tea was weak and indifferent, as it had always been and, as usual, his mother had asked him if he took sugar. On hearing that he did not, she had stared at him as if he had revealed some disappointing weakness.

"It's just that you've forgotten who they are," he said.

"What?"

"You must have known them once. The people in the photographs."

"Maybe I did," she said as if humoring him, "but I certainly don't know them now."

Her hair, which had not lost any of its color until she was into her eighties, had now faded into an indeterminate greyness. Uncombed, it surrounded her head like a deranged halo.

"Some holiday photographs of me as a boy are missing," Stoner said, attempting to keep an involuntary tone of grievance out of his voice. "I was on the beach, looking up towards the promenade. Do you remember

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■

how you used to call to us from there to say that it was time for tea?"

"What?"

He felt a stirring of love in the remembrance of a time when she had defined the movements and the limits of his days, her voice calling to him, her hand closing around his as they walked towards the hotel. His brother would walk beside their father and engage in a conversation that deliberately excluded him. He remembered his mother's dress and the pieces of jewelry that she wore and her reassuring insistence that he was not freakishly underweight. Now she sat there as if waiting for some reassurance that he could not offer to her, her fingers plucking restlessly at an unseen thread in the pocket of a cardigan that she had knitted for herself during some unrecorded winter, turning banal hours into something almost permanent. Her eyes were bright yet oddly without expression, her lips drooped into a sardonic expression of disapproval. He wanted to reach out and thank her for old kindnesses but it was impossible. Although she sat within arm's reach there was the illusion of a great distance between them.

During lunch with his cousin, a clergyman from another country, Stoner referred to the photograph albums. His cousin took an informed interest in the history of the family, reaching back to small triumphs in the past as others might reach into the future with hopes for the achievements of their children.

"When you're out there this afternoon get her to show them to you," Stoner said. "There are at least a dozen pictures of your entire family. I'd say that you were four or five years old. They were taken in a garden. There's some sort of bench. And an arch."

"I think I can even remember your father taking them," his cousin said. "It was a holiday. We had called in somewhere for lunch."

"They're in an album with a brown cover. At least, I hope they are. She's been taking out photographs and losing them."

He felt guilty at this disloyalty to her, at exposing her to disapproval, but his cousin didn't seem surprised.

"I've come across that kind of thing," he said. "Older people can do it as if it's part of some unfinished business. Maybe you have to get rid of the past before you can embrace the future."

The idea that his mother might be acting compulsively was both new and disturbing to Stoner. It hinted at the long and friendless days that she spent alone with her memories. It had been easier to regard the matter as a minor if irritating eccentricity, a habit to be deplored rather than understood.

His cousin had the breezy manner of a man who dealt in certainties. Faith had left his face almost free from doubt; his beliefs had resulted in no evident anguish. He looked questioningly at Stoner, silently urging a resumption of the conversation. Stoner looked away.

Later that evening he dialed his mother's number, prepared, as usual to let the phone ring and ring until she happened to hear and respond to it. She must have been in her bedroom because she answered almost immediately.

"Has Peter gone yet?" he asked.

"What?"

"Peter. Has he gone?"

"I don't know anyone called Peter."

"Your nephew. You've always particularly liked him. I had lunch with him today, then he went out to visit you."

"There was a man here but I don't know who he was. A tall man in a dark suit. He had grey hair."

"That was Peter. You must have recognized him!"

"What?"

"I asked him to look at the photograph albums. There are photos of his family that I knew he'd like to see. Can you remember if he looked at them?"

"I don't know what he looked at."

"Try to remember," he said irritably, "please just try. It's important to remember."

He regretted, almost immediately, having used a tone of voice that would be inordinately disturbing to her. He didn't even understand why the photographs mattered so much to him They were nothing, after all, but accidental memories; children in a summer garden, boys on a beach.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"What?"

They remained silent for ten or twelve seconds, then in an anxious voice his mother asked, "Are you there?"

It was as if she were calling to someone whom she feared might be lost, her voice thin and distant. "Are you there?"

He didn't answer her. He couldn't think of anything to say. □

WILLIAM FRANCIS BISBEE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Seven Famous Old Men

A Story by Dan Coffey

I'd been taking ibuprofen for days, because of a mysterious pain in my right knee. It just wouldn't go away. Only hot baths helped, but I couldn't spend all day in the tub. My skin was so dry already, that I went through a big bottle of moisturizing lotion in less than a week.

I don't know if it was the ibuprofen, or the pain itself, but I had very vivid dreams. I dreamed that a swarm of older men were in love with me. Every night for an entire week, a different famous old man confessed his love. I could tell that these men knew and understood me completely, and that this understanding and knowledge resulted in their infatuation.

On Sunday night, it was Walter Cronkite. He came over right after the eleven o'clock news. Usually, I'm in bed by then, but that night I'd had coffee after dinner, and that always keeps me up.

He looked tired, and a little older than he seemed on camera. I guess the TV makeup covers some of the crow's-feet. But they were beautiful crow's-feet, a web of lines radiating from the corner of his eyes. They emphasized his kindness and sense of humor. We women are especially appreciative of humor in men.

We stayed up very late, just talking. He had a lot to get off his chest. I wasn't anxious for him to leave, but I didn't want to sleep with him. Not yet. He didn't seem in a hurry, either, and that made me want to be around him even more.

We were talking about an episode of the old TV series "The Twentieth Century," sponsored by Mutual of Omaha. He was narrating footage of the D-day invasion of the beach at Normandy when the alarm clock went off.

All day at work, I couldn't stop thinking about Walter Cronkite. He was like a smell on my clothing, a lingering taste in my mouth.

The next night it was Isaac Bashevis Singer. The old Yiddish writer was listing all my virtues, explaining to me in great detail what a marvelous person I am. I hardly said a word. It was all I could do to keep from blushing. I kept turning my head from side to side, grinning like an idiot and saying "No, no, you're too kind." My protests seemed to leave no impression.

Singer and I were in the wicker gondola of a hydrogen balloon, wearing down parkas, and floating thousands of feet above Central Europe. The silence was profound. Every once in a while we could hear the bleating of sheep, or the tinkling of a bell wafting up from the fields below. For some reason we were reading Wordsworth. We took turns. I read "I wandered lonely as a cloud...," and he nodded his head in understanding. He recited "Lines Composed Above Tintern Abby" from memory, and when he got to the part "Great God! I'd rather be a pagan suckled on a creed outworn," he turned and looked directly into my eyes. I saw that his eyes were brimming with tears.

I believed him when he said he loved me, although I suspected that once he really got to know me, he would be sorely disappointed.

That day at work, I felt peaceful, slightly sleepy. The Victorians would have called it "languorous." No matter how much coffee I drank, it seemed to have no effect. That evening, I tried vainly to read and then to watch television. I was unable to muster the concentration for either. I was eagerly anticipating sleep, when I would dream again.

This time, it was Lee Iacocca, a man for whom I felt little natural empathy. The more he talked, the less I felt. I just didn't believe him when he told me he loved me more than any other woman, than any amount of money, than any piece of real estate or fancy imported car. His mouth said one thing, but his eyes said another.

We were eating dinner in a fancy hotel restaurant, the kind with lots of inappropriate dark stained wood, considering it was inside a modern hotel. The menus were huge, leather covered wood slabs, and weighed at least five pounds each.

The paneled walls of the room seemed to breathe, in and out, inhale and exhale. I noticed that Lee's aftershave was a strong musk, an earthy, feminine scent that seemed at odds with his bulky body encased in a thousand dollar suit. But his eyes were gentle, kind, imploring.

The food consisted of enormous servings of meat or fish. I had little appetite. The waiter made a big deal of getting me a doggy bag. When the alarm rang, I awoke disappointed, and slightly nauseous.

The next night it was John Cameron Swayze. I never cared much for him, remembering him only from his Timex commercials on Ed Sullivan. His speech was clipped and rapid, and as he talked, he nervously toyed with a lit cigarette, only smoking it just before snuffing it out.

Swayze was persuasive, asking me to go away with him to a Caribbean resort. I remember looking at the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wallpaper in his apartment. It was hideous. Giant pink begonias on a lime green background. When I looked back at him, he had changed into the sports announcer Jack Buck. At least I think it was Jack Buck. We chatted in a relaxed way about sports. He didn't seem to mind that I knew nothing about the subject. Jack was the kind of guy who can talk about sports with anybody.

By now, all I wanted to do was sleep. My dream life was far more interesting than my waking hours. The next night, Lee J. Cobb was on his knees before me, shirt-sleeves rolled up, pounding the floor, crying my name. He looked up at me with a tragic expression on his face, as if he fully expected to die if I would not be his and his alone. We were in the kitchen of some tenement apartment. The stove and ice box were almost antiques. Out among the fire escapes and clothes lines, someone was singing in Italian.

My work began to suffer. I couldn't pay attention to any one task for more than a few minutes. Once, I broke into tears in the restroom. To tell the truth, I was cracking up. Falling prey to old fears and anxieties I thought I'd been done with for years.

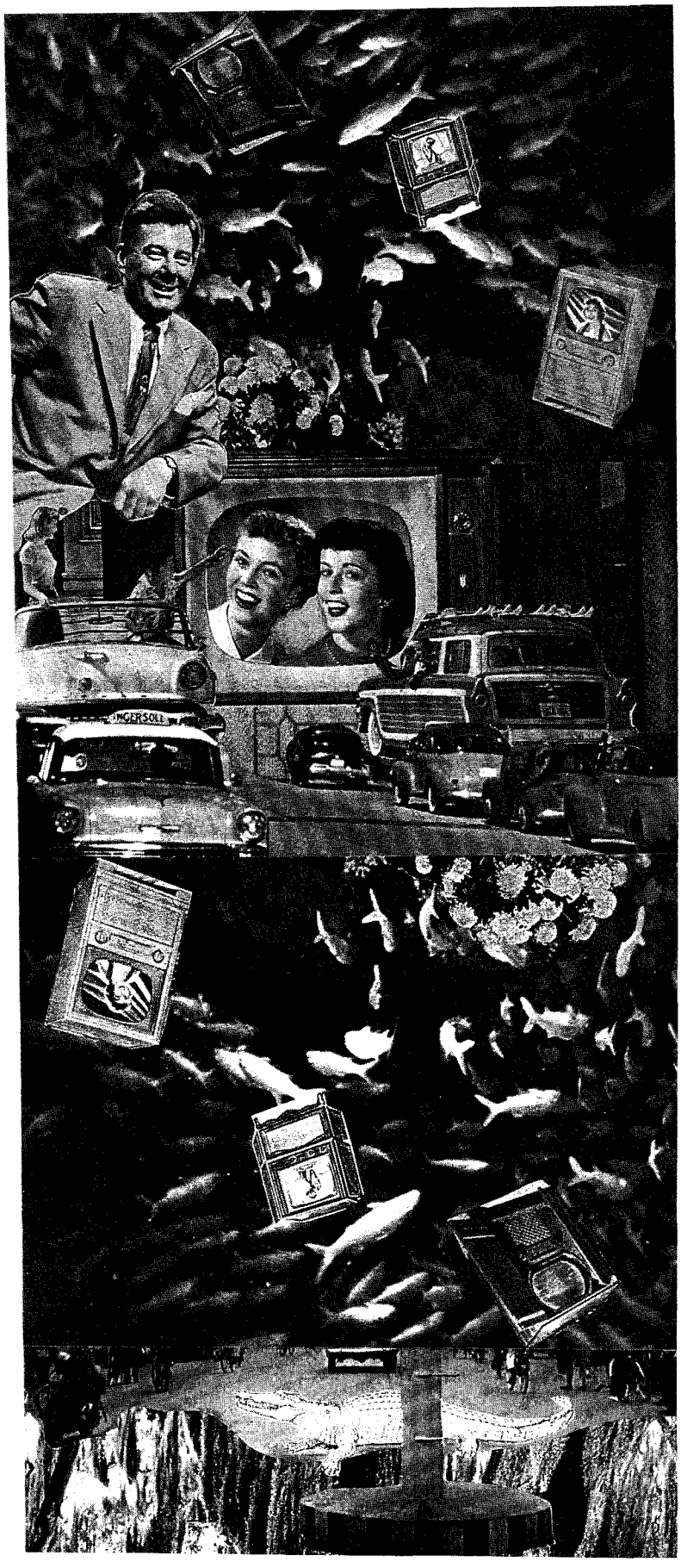
A faceless, nameless shroud of dread seemed to lurk in the background. I felt guilt, but didn't know why. None of these men had pressed me to choose among them. You'd have thought their professions of desire would only make me feel better.

The last night I was visited by Garry Moore. The crew-cutted TV personality looked at me with total understanding. We were in a shoe store. I was the customer, and he was the salesman.

Garry had assembled a large pile of shoeboxes at my feet, and was slowly, carefully slipping the shoes on my stockinged feet. When he picked up my foot, he did it with a firm caress, a move that sent shivers up my spine.

"Life's like a series of shoes. Sometimes we're worn out, smell bad, and shameful to look at. But then you suddenly find a new pair, and there's spring in your step. Get up and go!"

He looked up at me and smiled. I loved him. I loved the shoes. When I woke up, I could still smell new leather, and could hear the 1001 Strings playing "Summer Place" over and over again. □



WILLIAM FRANCIS BISBEE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tree Huggers and Damned Cowboys:
The Rhetoric of an Environmental Conflict

PETER CHILSON

AUGUST 11, 1995. In an Ephrata, Washington conference room—a row of shuttered windows, maroon carpet, blackboards on white plaster walls—a conflict of points of view and ideas unfolds. At a long table, where, among others, a professor in khakis and leather street shoes sits beside a rancher in jeans and boots, a certain stoicism takes form, tight, uneasy, a bit provocative. The struggle for words and definitions had begun as the rancher entered, holding a coffee mug stenciled with the declaration, "Ranchers, The Original Environmentalists."

Seven people: two ranchers; a state wildlife biologist and a range management expert; a federal soil conservation official; an Audubon Society representative and a University of Washington professor of business and environmental policy. Enough conflicting interests to start a good spitting match with clashing metaphoric invective about "tree huggers," and "government Gestapo tactics," or "Goddamned Cowboys" and "land rapers." Instead, they sit politely around a wood table on the third floor of the federal Bureau of Land Management building—across the street, in fact, from the Ephrata courthouse where a judge considers the case of grunge rocker Courtney Love, who slugged another musician at a local concert arena. (She will earn a suspended jail sentence and mandatory anger management therapy.)

Anger is on the collective mind of these men. This is the first meeting of a committee, state appointed, to revise the Sagebrush Flat Pygmy Rabbit-Livestock Coordinated Resource Management Plan. The revision, according to the biologist, will "emphasize" the survival of the pygmy rabbit—one of North America's rarest mammals and a resident of eight western states. In Washington, the rabbits' last active habitat is five patches of Douglas County shrub steppe, the largest being 3,600 acres of pristine steppe and livestock range called Sagebrush Flat. The notion that grazing might save the pygmy rabbit—which is not, like the bald eagle or the spotted owl, an indicator species that reflects a habitat's condition—is the whole point, to settle the question by way of experiment.

Together, the men must define ungrazed plots from grazed so biologists can study how the land evolves. They must agree on how to better balance grazing seasonally; on a new number for cows allowed to graze at any given time; on how they will be watered. And, they must set up something the old plan does not have, a five-year scientific monitoring program that will satisfy the rancher, the state, and environmentalists. The end result should determine where pygmy rabbits live best: where there are cows, or where there are not. In a deeper sense, for people unfamiliar with the study of law or linguistic nuance, and the seemingly academic exercise of arguing word interpretations, this means settling, somehow, on meanings of terms like, "proper grazing use," or "viable population," or whether to use the word "community" in place of "population" when referring to plant and wildlife groups—this from people who have made biology a life's work, and others for whom the state of the land ultimately comes to food for cows.

The process will go on for months.

To begin, the mediator says: "We must respect each other's right to disagree." Thoughts circle the table. "We'll never accomplish anything apart," says the biologist. The professor says, "I want to be more cooperative than confrontational." The rancher takes his turn and I am relieved to hear honest sarcasm: "I'm the guy who's supposed to be trying to get rid of all the pygmy rabbits."

THIRTEEN MILES NORTH of Ephrata, along a road that cuts freshly plowed wheat fields, dust devils tease the landscape on early summer afternoons—each swirling cone a centrifugal calculus of dust, grass, pressure gradients and sparring drafts of cold and hot air that crash and spin. They rise from loess, a fine rich soil ground from rock by massive glaciers many thousands of years ago, and blown in from the north to settle on the Columbia River Plateau. Rock dust. To the west, nine dust devils dance in a zigzag line north to south. Sentinels of a sort.

The road, narrow asphalt, crosses lumpy brown topography and dips to where the lumps even out across farm land that bumps hard against soft green: sagebrush and grass. Bluebunch wheatgrass, steppe bluegrass, cheat grass, mustard, though the grass has yellowed. This is Sagebrush Flat. Here, in August, green comes almost exclusively from the light hue of sage. Dust

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

devils hit the sagebrush and vanish suddenly, as if consumed. No one knows why the flat wasn't plowed long ago. "A freak coincidence," some say. What matters now is that Sagebrush Flat is one of the West's last pieces of deep soil pristine shrub steppe.

I am with Fred Dobler, a state Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist, who turns the pickup we are in off the asphalt onto a dirt road beside the flat, and parks. On foot we weave through waist-high sagebrush, studying the ground. After a while he says, "I don't see any new burrows. I haven't since spring." We are looking for pygmy rabbits, which thrive on shrub steppe where they like thick sagebrush. They are nocturnal, closely resembling the cottontail, and few people know them on sight. In fact, no one knows how many survive across the West. Dobler, in jeans and green uniform shirt, squats to pick up tiny black pellets, pygmy rabbit droppings. He cups his hand, separating them with an index finger. He smiles. "These are days old."

Scant evidence of an elusive mammal on a scrap of rare habitat amidst a sea of wheat. The rabbit is endangered in Washington, but only a candidate for federal protection, a "category two" species. It would not take much, a brush fire or disease, says Dobler, to kill the 200 or so rabbits he believes live on the Flat and four nearby steppe patches, and, thus, a chance to probe the mystery of a mammal's survival on fragmented habitat. "The pygmy rabbit population," he adds, "is too small to be considered stable."

He replaces the droppings and says something that seems out of character for a wildlife biologist. "Grazing might be a tool to achieve the development of rabbit habitat, though we don't yet have the hard data to prove that"—that when cows eat grass, sagebrush grows better in less crowded soil, which may explain the rabbits' survival. Dobler's ideas unfold in swollen, clearly enunciated sentences that proceed as if up stairs. From his last utterance, the words "might," "tool," "achieve," "development," and "yet" are key when combined with the disclaimer that the "data" is incomplete. Suggestive language at best, inconclusive at worst. Dobler's diction falls between entrenched farm and ranch culture, and environmentalists who want the cows off now in the name of species preservation. Hence the need for the committee: to find a more acceptable compromise. "The science is flawed," he says, "but not by incompetence. The subject is hard to nail down."

Important, too, is his unwillingness to betray opinion. Dobler shoves his hands in his jeans pockets. "Tempers and guns," he says, "are loaded on both sides."

MY FILE ON SAGEBRUSH FLAT is eight inches thick, some 500 pages of copies of state documents in black 12-point type divided by graphs, maps, ink stacks of statistics covering the land's natural history, its human history, the state of its ecology. Scientific studies, memos, official letters in even prose: nature with a bureaucratic shape. This is to say, as the original 1993 range plan explains, "This site is basically a sagebrush-bunchgrass plant community. Big sagebrush and bluebunch wheatgrass are the dominant species." The condition of the land, always referred to as a "unit" or "site," is measured by its grazing suitability, meaning the health and abundance of grass. "For the unit as a whole," the plan says, "about 35% is in good condition and 50% in fair."

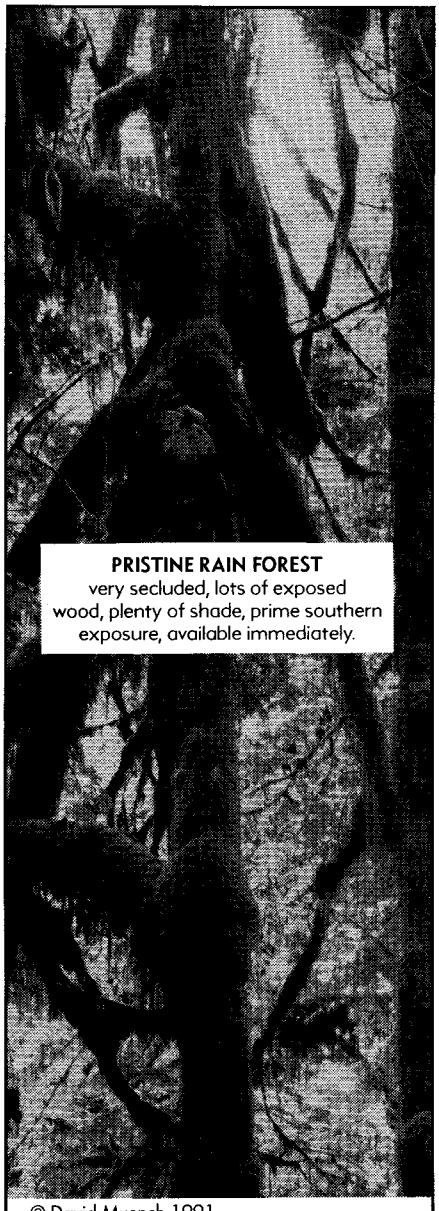
The plan, from the start, was a compromise, which in the land-use debate is a word that attracts the strongest vitriol against a background of rhetoric established in decades old conflicts over, say, Pennsylvania coal fields or western Washington timber lands. Compromise equals treason. On the timber issue a bumper sticker captures a decade of discourse. "Save a Logger, Shoot an Owl." Bitter, frustrated words that point to quick solutions, like the men who displayed a hangman's noose after an Audubon Society activist spoke at a 1994 wetlands hearing in Everett, WA. And Dick Carver, rogue rancher and county commissioner in Nevada, drew on the energy of that attitude during a Washington state speaking tour last year to protest federal range land reforms. "We're in another civil war," the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* quoted him as telling a group on March 30, 1995. "You cannot compromise with the federal government." Days later he broadened that declaration to state government in a speech in Ellensburg, 30 miles from Ephrata.

When I mention Carver's ideas to David Billingsley, the rancher who holds the Sagebrush Flat grazing rights, he says, "I don't think I'd use those words, but I understand where he's coming from." For him, the flat fits into a 25,000-acre operation, of which he owns 10,000 acres and leases the rest from private owners and the state and federal governments. Compromise is, uncomfortably, Billingsley's choice.

In blunt single-spaced letters, some push the other side of rhetoric away from compromise. "We have read your [plan]," Denzel Ferguson, director of the Oregon-based Society Advocating Natural Ecosystems, wrote the Department of Fish and Wildlife in 1994, "and are shocked... Surely if the good citizens of your state knew of this...you would have rebellion on your hands." Anti-grazing arguments are supported by a large body of science, journalism, and more metaphorically in fiction, poetry, and personal essays on landscape and ecology: from the journal *Conservation Biology* to *The Prairie Keepers*, Marcy Houle's 1995 memoir of Oregon's Zumwalt Prairie, in which she writes, "For an instance, the sun split the clouds, torching the prairie with flames of color." Then there is the work of scientist-activists like Steve Herman, a naturalist at Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington, and author of a well-circulated, unpublished text called "Grazing and Pygmy Rabbits at Sagebrush Flat."

Herman has lobbied hard to protect Sagebrush Flat, touring the terrain with Fred Dobler, using it as a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


PRISTINE RAIN FOREST
very secluded, lots of exposed wood, plenty of shade, prime southern exposure, available immediately.
© David Muench 1991

Prime Real Estate. For years, The Nature Conservancy has purchased large tracts of it so that endangered species can flourish there. Now, as partners in the public television series Nature, we're helping provide another place where wildlife can flourish. To learn more about these and all of our activities, call 1-800-628-6860.

NATURE & The Nature Conservancy

Nature appears Sundays on PBS

field laboratory for his students, circulating his article and the weight of his academic authority, his reputation as a Pacific Northwest naturalist, making speeches, tossing a barrage of letters to various divisions of state government.

In his article, Herman the naturalist argues, "There exists no scientifically demonstrable basis for arguing that cattle—increased, maintained, or even permitted on Sagebrush Flat—would benefit Pygmy Rabbits." And Herman the activist, protesting the first range plan in a 1993 letter to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, writes, "Such nonsense is the equivalent of claiming that the earth is flat, or that we and the other Great Apes have no common ancestors." In fact, the word "flat," in Sagebrush Flat, angers Herman, who becomes more insistently vivid when I meet him. "It's not a FLAT! The word denigrates the land. It's STEPPE!" He mocks the word in a drawn out, pejorative nasal, "Fleeat," the way one might look at a garden and say, "Weeeds." Herman warms to his subject. "When the chips are down people always go with people at the expense of organisms." Sagebrush Flat, he adds, is a sensitive steppe ecosystem, so vulnerable to the heavy hoof and appetite of bovine creatures that permitting grazing there is "like raising cows on the roof of the Sistine Chapel—absolute unmitigated insanity."

Herman was not asked to serve on the committee, and he refuses to attend as an observer. But his writing is on the table through every meeting.

SEPTEMBER 11. I am thinking, while watching Fred Dobler maneuver through committee meetings, of the term "no man's land," the military expression for that zone between armies, where life is near impossible. Dobler, by choice, has carved a professional niche in such a place. The rhetoric of conflict has followed him through 22 years with the state, including eight years of work on the peregrine falcon, whose future looked dim in 1980 when he began his research. The experience left him tired, puzzled at contradictions and bitter competition among the very people—activists and scientists—who sought to save the falcon. Researchers, he says, hoarded information and belittled each other's work.

"If attitudes and personalities had been better at the beginning," he says of the state's falcon preservation effort, "we might have had more powerful cooperation."

Dobler hesitates to discuss how such conflict has influenced his work, his world view, his daily life. Yet the connection is there, visible and audible, a continuous occupational hazard. It is not just Sagebrush Flat that concerns him, but conflicts over land-use issues and species protection, not just the pygmy rabbit, but the sage grouse, the horned owl, not just ranchers and farmers, but landowners wary of permitting access to deer hunters to control a herd that threatens crops, native plants and, thus, shrub and grass steppe wildlife.

At times he shows the strain, a fidgety nervousness at the negotiating table. Folding and unfolding his arms, shifting, crossing, uncrossing his legs, rubbing his hands, tweaking an earlobe, leaning forward with elbows on the table, leaning back, tapping a foot as if to a beat.

Evident in this is his precise ear for detail and language. As the committee molds the new plan, he says repeatedly, by way of bringing focus to the discussion, "This will have to be word-smithed." He objects, for example, to the use of the term "viable habitat" in a revision of the plan's stated goals, "because there is no way to define the word viable." Dobler, an amateur songwriter and electric guitarist with a country gospel band called "Fire in the Desert," focuses on language disharmony. He asks for clarifications ("When you say, enhance the habitat, do you mean, increase its size?") and for playbacks ("Would you repeat that, please?"). With a scientist's sense of dispassion and clarity and an artist's intensity, he lashes at every word too heavy with opinion or

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

emotion, at every word that cannot be nailed down, at every single loose idea. "We need to manage this land," he reminds the committee, "with a sense of balance."

Early in the negotiations, I ask Tom Thomas, the university professor and the committee's strongest environmental voice, what he thinks of Dobler's work. He hesitates and says Dobler has gone too far to accommodate ranchers. "I don't trust him," Thomas says, but adds, slowly, as if he has not made up his mind, "Dobler has a point of view, a perspective he wants to advance that I suspect will allow him to cope from the point of view of living and working in the area." Thomas pauses. "[Dobler] has to develop a rationale for coexistence of rabbits and cattle, otherwise his scientific integrity would require him to take a stand against grazing, and if that happened, I suspect everything would come crashing down around him and he could not live here and do his job."

But Thomas—who was asked to serve on the committee by the head of an activist group called the Washington Environmental Council—has his own worries. He answers to a loose, ornery constituency of scientists and activists from the Council, the University of Washington, The Nature Conservancy, and Evergreen State College's Steve Herman. "We all have to worry about this—God, we are going to put our names on something that is going to get us all in trouble, every one of us [on the committee]."

Through each meeting, voices remain in precarious balance, cool yet tense. It is as though this group, whose chemistry includes degrees in zoology, soil biology, range management, agricultural engineering, and environmental policy, has realized a responsibility to act as a rhetorical filter against the "This is War!" scream of environmental conflict. Present at the table, in fact, are some of the trappings of war: deep mutual resentment—in this case, the ranchers' complex family and economic ties to the land against the environmentalists' scientific logic, longing and fear for pristine ecosystems, and anger over their ruin. Add the ever-present social unease among negotiators, and the absence of the conflict's more extreme participants as the "diplomats" work out details. Finally, there are the uniforms—the ranchers' rigid boots-jeans-long sleeve shirt-short haircut-cowboy hat attire versus the casual, almost sloppy by comparison, street dress of everyone else.

And as the committee works, during that summer and fall of 1995 and now into the winter of 1996, there is rumbling from a distant front, a bitter national narrative. This is what the chief editorial writer of The Wenatchee *World*, a central Washington regional daily, wrote on March 31, 1995 the day I first visited Sagebrush Flat:

> Extremism is chic, left and right. We see aggrieved loggers and ranchers acting like extras in a John Wayne movie. Words like "war"and "revolution" and "secession" enter their vocabulary too easily...And their environmentalist foes vow to continue their fight against commerce down to the last nickel...They would much prefer that timber rot or burn than produce the horror of profit...

On May 3, the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* runs a report with this lead: "In eastern Idaho, Challis National Forest timber officer Sharon Bradley doesn't wear her green uniform much these days. 'I don't want to get shot,' she says." And, in the same story: "Several agencies have told employees to back away from confrontation. The Forest Service is warning employees not to go into areas alone." Then, on October 23, *Time* magazine publishes a cover story subtitled, "An inside look at the West's growing rebellion," over a photograph of "sagebrush rebel" Dick Carver in white cowboy hat, jeans, scowling for the camera, looking as if he might just draw a pistol, though, of course, he does not wear one.

"GODDAMMIT, I'M emotional," Dave Foreman, founder of Earth First!, proclaimed in a speech given across the country in 1989, and which I heard at Pennsylvania State University. "I'm passionate, I feel, I'm not a goddamn computer." In the tangle of environmental debate, its emotion and dogma and caricature, we forget the roots of rhetoric, the notion that Foreman's words reveal a theology in the way both sides form their arguments: without apology, with iconography and visuals of sacrifice and righteous morality, evolving to a steady "Give me liberty, or give me death!" tone that voices every activist's Patrick Henry fantasies. An American polemic that has granted itself abundant rhetorical space. In Dick Carver's case, the definitive icon is the Constitution, a copy of which he carries folded in his breast pocket, and whose Bill of Rights Patrick Henry helped draft. Carver does not, in public, necessarily quote from it, as much as wave the document in the air to proclaim his own "American Revolution," his "God-given" right to own guns and use land as he likes, and to remind people, as the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* reported on March 31, 1995 that "It is the key that keeps me out of jail." Foreman, on the other hand, draws from Edward Abbey, whose bald challenges in *Desert Solitaire*, a memoir of the Utah Canyonlands wilderness, begins with an absolute: "This is the most beautiful place on earth."

Steve Herman, as well, speaks bluntly, as if he is responsible for the natural world. Much of what he says comes out in first person, in anecdotes (like the time he deliberately hit a cow with his truck, albeit, at low speed); in accusations, "Fred Dobler is a corrupt scientist" or "They (the committee members) are thumbing their noses at the scientific and conservation communities"; and in self-conscious declarations, "Yes, I'm a single-position man." He pauses and laughs. "I'm going to be the Chico Mendes of Sagebrush Flat. Take me out, motherfucker!"

I am listening to this, in fact, on the flat, where we are camped, by the grace of Herman's green Toyota

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Land Cruiser (and a dirt track) in a dry creek bed in the center of the property, which he wants fenced off from the public and ranchers within what the state calls a Natural Areas Preserve, so we won't be able to do what we are doing now. I have talked him into this excursion. As the sun retires, brilliant red around nine p.m., we park in sand below gentle slopes of sagebrush that shield us, east and west, from the main road and distant farm houses.

In the morning we rise at 5:30, when day is bright in high desert. On foot we wander with bird and plant books, birding scope and tripod, binoculars, pocket magnifying glass. Herman is a big, balding white-bearded man in a khaki field cap and dirty corduroys. Long a student of shrub steppe, he is not interested so much in pygmy rabbits, as in knowing the place. We list birds we see—dozens of species are active on the flat in spring and early summer—such as horned larks, common night hawks, a single ring-billed gall, probably strayed from its home near the Columbia River 20 miles west. Then native plants: purple sage, pepper grass, white daisies, wild onion, and a plant that leaves Herman frowning as he squats, drawing from his shirt pocket a pencil and notebook. "Don't know this one." Over a day on the flat, we do not look for rabbit burrows. "The state views it mainly as a pygmy rabbit site," he says, "when they should be viewing it as a whole community."

Herman moves between teacher mode, showing me a sage sparrow or horned lark, and frequent bursts of passion. When we come upon a field of cheat grass, he says, "I hate this stuff...What amazes me is how people can't see destruction where it stares them in the face." Cheat grass is a weed that invades disturbed soils, crowding out native plants and compromising an ecosystem. "When the too-great herds and flocks chewed and trampled the hide off the foothills," Aldo Leopold wrote in a brief essay called 'Cheat Takes Over,' something had to cover the raw eroding earth." We find swaths of cheat, bright yellow in late June, seeds drooping from the top in prickly tufts that stick to socks and pants. Cheat yellow stains places where cows have strayed, a fence has been built, or a well. "This place is so vulnerable," Herman says.

Grazing, ranchers argue, helps vegetation survive. Damaged plants generate new tissue, which keeps communities fresh. True enough. The risk is that intensive grazing does not always allow perennial grasses (those that regenerate annually from an existing root system) time to grow back. They die out gradually, a process that exotics accelerate in trampled soil. "Livestock grazing," says a 1994 Conservation Biology survey article of recent research, "is the most widespread influence on native ecosystems of western North America."

Herman has no patience for such language. Grazing has destroyed much of the western lands' ecology and it threatens Sagebrush Flat. That, he insists, is all there is to it. "Goddamn cowboys!"

Here, on the subject of cowboys, Herman spends much energy while talking about Sagebrush Flat. He erects an argument that accommodates no disagreement, no middle ground, an argument that accuses ranchers of grand fraud, of catering to a beast whose insatiable appetite and clumsiness causes soil erosion, stream degradation, habitat and species destruction under the guise of economic necessity and a romantic, paternal attitude to land. A façade, Herman insists, reinforced by the cowboy cliché: robust man, grass between the teeth on horseback staring at the horizon, content in his labor and lonesome guardianship of the land.

"What bullshit. They don't know plants and animals, and they don't care," he tells me, "and they'll get you with the romance stuff. You'll turn cowboy lover, too, I know it." After all, Herman says, They've already gotten Fred Dobler.

DAVID BILLINGSLEY, the rancher, is a listener, an "honest and reasonable" man yet sometimes inefficient land manager, according to state officials who know him. He admits to mistakes. Yes, overgrazing has done damage, he says, but consider his job's complexity. The rancher, he adds, must be a farmer, botanist and meteorologist, large animal veterinarian, inventor, mechanic, businessman, and diplomat. So many factors to manage, so many beyond control. The Sagebrush Flat negotiations, he says, "are a beautiful opportunity to convince [government] agencies that we are not all out here raping the land, and to show other ranchers that we can work with the agencies."

To find Billingsley ranch, take Sagebrush Flat Road 10 miles north from Ephrata and turn left at the sign for Palisades. Drive two miles between wheat fields until the road drops, suddenly, through the basalt canyons of Moses Coulee. The main ranch buildings sit at the bottom, along a rock wall that shoots straight up hundreds of feet in layers of vertical columns, like stacked rows of long teeth. The Billingsley house, a broad one-story building, stands in a cluster of locust and maple trees. Nearby, a barn houses a workshop and across from that is a small clapboard home for a ranch hand. There is a small feedlot. Corn and alfalfa fields stretch a half mile to the coulee's far side.

On a hot July morning, Billingsley greets me in the workshop, which is crammed with tools and spare parts spread on tables and the floor. Lengths of electrical cord, rope and wire hang on the walls. There is a liquid sense of system, of projects beginning and being completed: a broken well pump, a carburetor being cleaned, and, behind the barn, Billingsley's creative pride—a cattle hauler built with an old school bus chassis, the trailer of a wrecked truck, and salvage-yard axles. The project consumed three months and $3,000, half the cost of a used hauler. "I spend a lot of time collecting parts, procrastinating on building, but once I begin the process sort of rolls."

The coulee's vastness combined with the image of the hauler, the workshop's clutter, help define

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ranching: a creative scramble to make things work on a big scale, to meet complex regulations, bank debts and market prices, the limits of what the land can absorb, and somehow respect the weather's arbitrary dictatorship. Billingsley will soon haul part of his herd west over the Cascade Mountains to rented pasture on Washington's rainy Olympic Peninsula. In fall, given that rain renews the grass, he will put some cows on Sagebrush Flat. "I need to find them food," he says, packing tobacco in a wood and aluminum pipe with his thumbs. We walk to a white Ford pickup and we get in to take a tour of the ranch.

Billingsley makes an easy companion. He is articulate, a soft-spoken man with a degree in agricultural engineering from Washington State University. He has a wide, fleshy face and thick brown hair that rides high on his wrinkled neck. He drives his truck with a thermos of herbal tea beside him. An old, bolt-action .223 caliber rifle—"for coyotes and rattlesnakes"—hangs out of sight on the pickup's ceiling. "I don't like to make people nervous," he says.

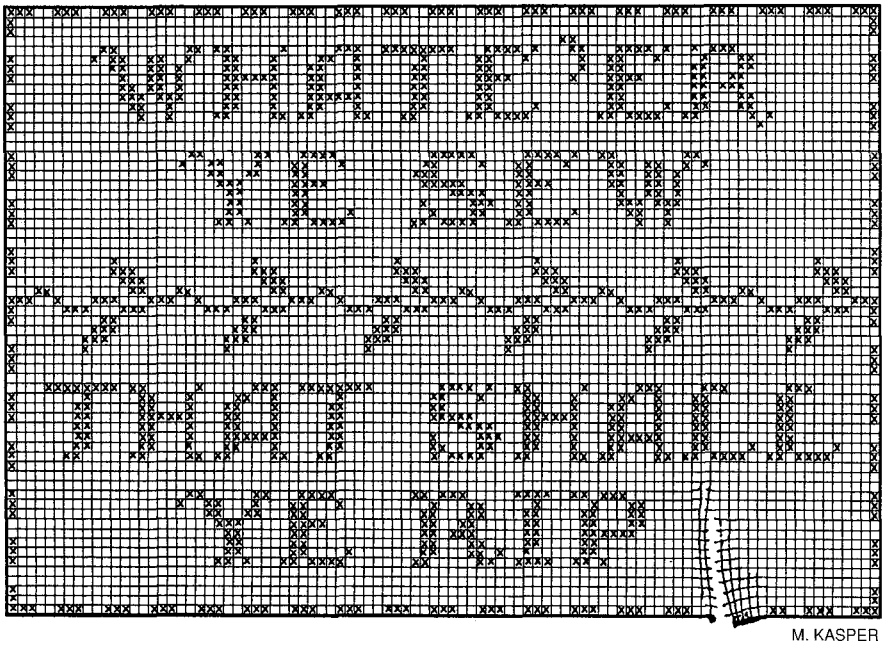
Up the road we see two young men in jeans and t-shirts, standing beside a pickup with a rifle and a drink cooler. We stop and 53-year-old Billingsley, six-feet, 200 pounds in beat-up pointy boots, jeans, plaid shirt, dirty white cowboy hat, walks over. "How ya doin'?" he asks. "Whatcha huntin'?" He listens, hands in pockets, to talk of coyotes and jack rabbits. He says, "Well, ya have to understand I've got cows out here. I can't afford to have 'em hurt. A gunshot'll spook 'em, ya know." He gets a sincere apology. Then he grins, nodding at the rifle. "That's a fine weapon." The encounter ends amicably.

Billingsley cultivates relationships. On arid terrain, where generations of homesteaders have depended on one another, community is survival. Ranchers watch each other's herds, share pastures. They offer a hand locating cattle in fierce weather.

On the committee, he and Tom Thomas, the college professor, sit together and get on well. Thomas is 15 years younger, an academic whose button-down demeanor contrasts sharply with the rancher's. But Thomas, too, is a listener. "I like him," Billingsley tells me as we drive in his pickup along a road that takes us up and out of the coulee. "I like people who ask intelligent questions and listen. Just someone who listens—now there's somebody I can work with." To preserve his neutrality, however, the professor has declined to visit the ranch. And Billingsley has kept his own distance at every meeting, sipping tea from the "Ranchers, The Original Environmentalists" mug, and probing dryly when Thomas talks of his mountain home he bought and fixed up. "You do an environmental impact study on that?"

Finally, on a plateau above the coulee, Billingsley stops the pickup at the house his father built in 1929 on the ranch's first 600 acres. The building stands like a shrine to determination and the land. Billingsley knows this land. He studies the plants, every geographic bump and line, and he can talk about the ice age floods that made the coulee. He recalls January 1995 when a freeze hit, then heavy rains. Water washed over frozen land into creeks, fields, and off the coulee rim, marooning the ranch buildings on dry ground, threatening feed stocks, and leaving cattle huddled in scattered pockets above water. Yet Billingsley loves how the event defined the land. "Any time you watch the traumatic nature of nature, there's excitement to it, a marvel."

Later, back in the truck, he adds, "People take a short view of what's going on." Just look, he says, at land around the ranch that has been planted or parceled out for homes and campgrounds. "We've been trying to manage this land reasonably, but there are people who don't approach this thing with open-mindedness." If his ranch folds, Billingsley wonders what will follow. More homes? A golf course?



M. KASPER

FEBRUARY 8, 1996. At the table, Fred Dobler and Tom Thomas look at each other nervously, as if unsure how to argue, to deal with what the process has come to: Thomas's environmental body politic does not like Dobler's five-year research program, his "messing" with an endangered species, as Thomas puts it in paraphrase. Dobler sighs and says flatly and partly in jest, "I'm in a bad mood." Thin smiles go around the table. "Look," he adds, his voice up an octave, "we aren't messing with anything, we are maintaining what has been to find out what has helped the rabbit survive."

The day is cold and wet as

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Washington state sags under thick rains and melting snows. Nearly every river, stream and lake down to southern Oregon swells under flood watch, and lakes cover Douglas County's frozen wheat fields. The water has washed out Sagebrush Flat Road and again marooned David Billingsley. He has told the committee to meet without him.

Thomas says, "There is the feeling that we have an endangered species and that we are manipulating different treatments, but that we are really doing this to preserve grazing." Dobler crosses his arms as Thomas continues, very still, his hands under the table. "There is a feeling that we have an endangered species that is on the edge, and when you have anything on the edge you don't mess with it...Five years [of research] is a drop in the bucket because steppe habitat takes too long to recover [from grazing]. Five-year treatments don't give you information you can use. These are real concerns."

Dobler looks up. He says, "That is a lot of B.S."

Coolly, Thomas persists. "I guarantee you that any result you come up with will be disputed vigorously...I am bringing to you the suggestion that you change the research process." This leaves little room for Dobler not to take the "suggestion" personally, not to see the accusation—"corrupt scientist!"—behind the words. Environmentalists, Thomas explains, want penalties for violating grazing restrictions; they want to monitor the research.

Dobler offers his translation: "They don't give a lick about our research, and they don't care about our findings. And if we do come up with something solid, they won't accept it anyway." He shakes his head and adds, "You know, I wouldn't be surprised if our findings support what your constituents say."

What is both feared and desired here, of course, is compromise. The argument's tone, tight and precise and cool, has been a soft bloodletting, a release and leveling-off of rhetoric that attempts to keep the dialogue in its cage and leave the way open to consensus. Dobler, his integrity in question, struggles to suppress angry vulgarity with "don't give a lick" and "bad mood" understatement. Thomas, on the other hand, frames his thoughts with passive phrases that preserve his neutrality: "There is a feeling" and "These are real concerns," or "I'm bringing to you the suggestion." His words cover the comments biologists and activists gave him on Dobler's five-year research proposal, responses ranging from willingness to work with Dobler to Steve Herman's bald declaration— "This is my worst nightmare!"

The conclusion comes in a rush. On February 21, Dobler and Thomas meet to discuss a research design. Thomas chooses compromise, agreeing, warily, that limited grazing over five years will have only a "marginal impact" on the flat.

On February 26, standing over aerial photographs spread on the table, the committee members cut Sagebrush Flat in half, banning grazing on one side and allowing cattle on the other during fall and winter. Finally, they have a plan. Researchers will study the habitat's comparative evolution and present the findings at bi-annual public meetings, giving environmentalists and independent scientists a chance for input. In the fifth year the committee will review the entire management plan and consider changes.

When the agreement is firm, there is, in the room, an undertone of worry and uncertainty, as if the men have concluded a shaky cease-fire along a dangerous border. Some laugh nervously, some check their watches. Billingsley, though pleased he still has grazing rights, says, "I'm not sure I'm that optimistic. This thing is not going to end soon." Dobler is cautious at best. "We have an outcome that is useful," he says. And Thomas tells me, "I haven't a clue as to whether we have done anything for the rabbit." □

WORKS CITED

—— "Don't Tread on Me: An inside look at the West's growing rebellion." *Time* , Vol. 146, No. 17. October 23, 1995.

—— 1993 Sagebrush Flat Pygmy Rabbit-Livestock Coordinated Resource Management Plan. See "Resource Inventory" section. Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Olympia, WA: 1993

Abbey, Edward, *Desert Solitaire.* Ballantine Books, New York: 1988.

Ferguson, Denzel, letter to Kaleen Cottingham, Supervisor, Washington State Department of Natural Resources. August 2, 1994.

Fleischner, Thomas L., "Ecological Costs of Livestock Grazing in Western North America." *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 8, No. 3, September 1994.

Herman, Steve, "Grazing and Pygmy Rabbits at Sagebrush Flat, Douglas County, Washington," August 23, 1994. Unpublished.

—— Letter to David Brittell, Assistant Director for Wildlife, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. 1993.

Houle, Marcy, *The Prairie Keepers: Secrets of the Grasslands.* Addison-Wesley, New York: 1995.

Leopold, Aldo, *A Sand County Almanac: and Sketches Here and There.* Oxford University Press, New York: 1987.

Taylor, Rob, "Rural federal workers feel heat from neighbors," Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, May 3, 1995. p1.

—— "Meet a man who would get U.S. out of the West." Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, March 31, 1995. p11.

Warner,Tracy, "Spare us these extremes." The Wenatchee *World*, March 31, 1995. p4.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A. MANETTE ANSAY

Winter

There is a certain magic to cold weather
when angels hang before our open mouths
and each sound carries like an urgent whisper.
The black scrape of the trees against the sky
like clumsy stitches biting at a seam
have closed the space between the clouds, the fields,
the restless wavering of brittle stalks.
The house stands like a beacon, or a warning.
It wears the watchful face of someone thinking
over something she has said in haste
and now regrets, regrets but cannot change.
Deer tracks kiss the lot line like a blessing.
Inside, alone, the one-eyed cat explores
forbidden rooms, floating like a soul
within the tired wreckage of the body.
Here is the father's death, the mother's grief.
Here is the tenth child born four months too soon
amid the wailing voices of the nine
that lived to fill the rooms and leave them empty.

What can be done with such a house that stands
as real as bread, as Sunday pot-roasts, pies,
the one-eyed cat vibrating with content,
the long Grace unfolding like a ribbon
wrapping up the Mass, the sign of the cross
the bow we wore all week: proudly, savagely?
What can be done with winter, that dull season
of belief, when all is white except
the bloody beating of the sleeping heart?
Summer seemed as far away as heaven,
a place where only wealthy people go
to sun, to read their complicated books
and eat the sort of food good people don't.
Here angels leave impressions in the snow
and press their frosted bodies to the glass.
Here we sculpt men the way that God made us—
wide-eyed, smiling, frozen in one place,
children who fear they might do something wrong.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Red"

MEL LAVINE

I GOT TO THE *TRIBUNE* up in Maine in the fall of 1950 by way of my journalism professor, to whom I'd written about job prospects. There was an opening in Sanford, he wrote, that was "short on money but long on experience." The remark, he hastened to add, was not his but came straight from the publisher.

"I'm not making any claims for the *Tribune*, one way or the other," he wrote. "Other than that it strikes me that Sanford is a place where you can get your start."

It was a job I badly needed after graduating from the University of Maine. I'd spent a footloose spring and summer in California cavorting with pimps, prostitutes, gamblers, and assorted underworld characters, believing I was soaking up dynamite material for a big book. But when I sat down to write, nothing came of it. In the meantime I'd drifted into odd jobs: night clerk in a rundown hotel on Alvarado street, house-to-house hosiery salesman, clerking in a grocery store.

I was coming home to journalism, my true love, and ready to scale the barricades armed with a philosophy I'd rehearsed before a kindly soul I'd met at the Boston *American*, a Hearst rag, of all places. Win Brooks was the managing editor, but he put me at my ease. He didn't give me a job (I was woefully unprepared for metropolitan journalism), but he let me run on with dreams of a conquering career.

"Why the Dickens do you want to get into a business like this?" he asked. There were a lot of bad things to be said about journalism, and very few good, he pointed out: mainly that the hours were long, the pay miserable, and proprietors a haughty, manipulative, blood-sucking lot.

I took no notice of this side of the news busines. The low pay, the broken careers, the reactionary publishers, the power of advertisers—none of this entered my picture of the future. Appraising the busy street below from his office window, I replied, "The thing that draws me to journalism is the opportunity of seeing how a community ticks, and trying to foster the cause of democracy; getting inside the institutions and the lives of the people, coming to grips, if you will, with the human comedy."

Win, puffing on a cigarette, said, "Why don't you marry a rich Jewish girl? If I were you that's what I'd do, and then you can do whatever you damn please."

"I got to be in love," I said.

He shrugged. There was no cure for the likes of me.

SANFORD, LESS THAN an hour's drive from Portland, was a New England mill town famous for its Palm Beach suits. Half Yankee, half French-Canadian, with a handful of Italian, Jewish and Greek families, it was typical of many factory towns in the region in the early 1950s.

The *Tribune* office was down on Water Street, around the corner from Main. An unprepossessing building, it could have sheltered any one of a score of enterprises. However, the clutter, the dilapidated furnishings, the wretched quarters—all this should have given me pause. But as I was making my way up the well-worn staircase to the newsroom all I could think was that I was finally answering my life's calling. Indeed I regarded my $27 a week salary as a windfall.

Leaning back in his chair, arms folded across his chest, was a man past 50 with a mop of hair that was now almost entirely white.

Norman (Red) McCann, the editor, said, "Any experience?"

"Not really."

"Not really? What on God's green earth is that supposed to mean?"

"Well, I wrote for the college paper. I contributed a column entitled 'Up in Maine' to the Boston *Jewish Advocate*."

"Do you know anything about baseball?"

"Oh, sure. I'm a Red Sox fan."

"Football? Basketball?"

"Certainly."

"Can you score a game?"

"I can score a baseball game."

"No shit?"

"Absolutely."

"If my legs were willing I'd come over there right now and kiss your goddam ass."

Red had polio as a kid and it had left him a cripple.

But there was nothing wrong, he said, with his commitment to the First Amendment. He'd put his passion for justice and fair play up against that of any other editor in the land.

"Let me tell you," he said. "The press is the last outpost in a Republic. Once the bastards get control of the government, once they get the courts, there's nothing left but the press. Believe me, boy, we're democracy's last line of defense. Are you ready to roll up your sleeves and go to work?"

Irish on one side, French-Canadian on the other, it was a ter-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rific thing to see Red swing into action on behalf of journalistic principle. Be it a clergyman or a shopkeeper, a selectman, crank or agitator, he more than held his own, giving better than he got by sticking with his principles.

People would troop up to the newsroom looking for some favor or special consideration. Red squared their requests with journalistic principle, and if they squared the favor-seekers went away happy. If not, they left empty-handed.

He was denounced regularly, sometimes on the phone and sometimes in person. On occasion, after work, I'd sit with him in his car on Main Street. People would come up, some to praise, some to give him hell. Red relished the beefs. He could yell as loud as any of his critics and out-point them all on the merits.

He was a larger-than-life figure to me, although I had to be around him awhile before I realized how smart he was. His face was red and fat like a drunkard's, though he didn't drink; he wore knockabout clothes, and he was always picking his teeth. In fact, he'd been first in his class at Bates College and could have gone on to something more remunerative than journalism, but newspapering was in his blood and I believe that's all he ever wanted to do in life.

So, in sum, Red was a lightning rod for controversy, and consequently he had more than his share of enemies.

This was O.K. with him.

"You don't go into this racket to be loved. You're in it to afflict the comfortable and see that the little fellow doesn't always get screwed." First Amendment issues, the people's right to know, and so on—these matters were not so much rhetoric to Red. Why, this is what a newspaper was all about, he'd say, and this was the real compensation in editing the *Tribune*. No one in his right mind went into journalism for the money.

Soon after I'd hit Sanford the local proprietors sold the *Tribune* to a Boston firm that had many business interests in addition to newspapers. When the takeover took place the new owners said no changes were being contemplated, that things would go on just as before, that everyone's job was safe, that we were all considered essential to the company's future.

THIS WAS HOW MATTERS stood one blazing morning in August when I looked up to find Red on the phone furiously taking notes. I was typing out a late item from Rotary. Isabel O'Connell was filling up her Woman's Page.

When he hung up, Red's face was flushed with excitement.

"Guess who was in the hoosegow Sunday night for drunken driving?"

Isabel made a few suggestions.

I took a stab.

"None of the above," cried Red. "Fred Nutter. Now can you beat that?"

"Arrested? Fred Nutter?" Isabel, a Sanford native, was breathless.

"Booked 'n everything," said Red, shaking his head.

Fred Nutter was the prodigal son of the family that operated the textile mills, Sanford's principal employer. He was a nuisance after a few drinks, but the police always saw to it that he got home safely.

"It has to be the new cop," I said.

Red nodded.

The arresting officer was a rookie, a young man from Tennessee who'd married a local girl and just moved to Sanford.

"The sonofabitch didn't know any better," said Red.

"Who's that who called?" I asked. "The chief?"

He nodded. "I can't start making exceptions now," Red said. He mopped his brow beaded in perspiration.

The next day—Tuesday—we got wind from Roger Woodcock, the young publisher, that the Nutter family was appealing to the owners in Boston to kill the story. They were afraid of shareholders hearing of the boy's problems, an embarrassment that could adversely affect the value of the stock.

Red picked his teeth.

"We're ready for them," he said at length.

And he was. He was beautiful. He looked over to me a few times and winked. He lectured his caller (a company lawyer) on the glorious history of the *Tribune*—"Maine's Greatest Weekly"—how it reported the news fairly and fully, how it enjoyed the regard of fair-minded people in Sanford and the journalistic community at large. With every story the *Tribune*'s credibility was at stake, and that had to count with proprietors as priority number one.

And, he went on, he was personally fond of young Nutter—he expected he'd straighten out one day and be a credit to the town—but as editor of the *Tribune* Red plainly had no choice; he was obligated professionally, ethically, in every principled way, to run the story.

"There, that ought to settle the matter," said Red, supremely pleased with himself, when he hung up.

The company lawyer was on the phone again the next day.

Red said, "For God's sake, everyone in town knows young Nutter's a drunk."

The Boston lawyer must have said something like, "If everyone in town knows all about Fred Nutter, the prodigal son, then why do you have to run any story at all?"

Red flared. "But you forget something. There's a world of difference between something that's just talked about and something that's written up in the *Tribune*."

And then bang! went Red's phone.

RED LOST HIMSELF by rewriting my stuff.

Those early stories of mine were often impaled on Red's spike. He'd say, "You'll get the hang of it one of these days. It takes awhile. This won't do," and then went on to rewrite the story in its entirety.

When I asked for criticism he'd say, "Just do it the way I do. Read my stories, read my leads."

Red was notorious in Maine journalism circles for his interminable leads. His idea of good newswriting was to cram every conceivable detail of significance into the very

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

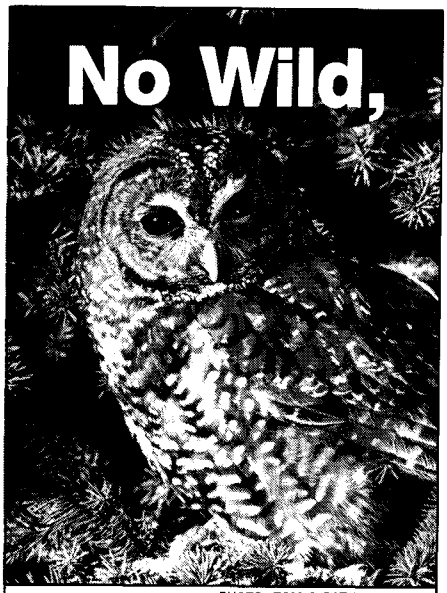


PHOTO: TOM & PAT LEESON

No Wildlife.

Life in the wild can be pretty tough these days. Without the necessary ancient-forest habitat to live in, some species like the northern spotted owl of the Pacific Northwest are severely threatened.

At the Sierra Club, we believe that these owls and the ancient forest ecosystems they depend on need our help. The Sierra Club's work to permanently protect our ancient forests also helps preserve the habitat of the northern spotted owl, giving them the range they need to help their population grow.

To learn more about our work protecting the forest habitats of endangered species such as the northern spotted owl, please write us at:

Sierra Club, Dept. PB
730 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 776-2211

SIERRA CLUB CENTENNIAL 1892-1992

first sentence or, failing that, into the first paragraph. There were lead sentences in the *Tribune* that went on for more than 100 words, opening paragraphs that ran four and five inches deep. At the same time Joe Adler, the shop foreman, liked to put as many stories as possible on page one—the combined result being that the *Tribune*'s front page might feature only the opening four or five lines of two dozen stories.

But never mind all that. Red got his high grades from his peers because he was an editor of character.

NOW THE BOSTON LAWYER was on the line again, insisting the story be killed. Why, replied Red, he'd be a laughing stock if he took a dive—never be able to look people in the eye again.

And then he threw a Hail Mary pass—"There's twenty years of a man's life tied up in this rag, doesn't that count for anything?"—as if the people down there had a heart.

Red was flexible. O.K., no big deal, no end of the world headlines. O.K., an item, two lines, three at most, somewhere deep inside the paper. Look, if he'd got to Nutter before the dumb cop, he not only would have driven the poor sonofabitch home but tucked his ass into bed.

"They've got to give me a break," said Red, turning to Roger when he was off the phone. "They owe me the courtesy. With all due respect, *I'm* the *Tribune* to the folks in this town."

He'd gone the extra mile. No headlines. (Nothing like "Town Father Found Drunk in Cemetery!" the time a selectman was found sleeping it off at Myrtle Grove. Nothing like that.) A brief item. Inside the paper. Deep.

Now Roger said, "The New York *Times* and the Boston *Globe*—I bet *they* have their sacred cows. It's not like it was, Red. We're working for different people. These days you've got to be adaptable."

Red and Roger went back a long time. Both grew up in Sanford, and Roger, a genial New Englander in his thirties with thinning hair, had taken over as publisher when Red was already an institution in Sanford.

Roger was pleading with Red to get off his high horse.

WE WERE PUTTING the paper to bed the next night when the lawyer was back on the line with the final word. The new owners wanted the story killed, period.

"If I hear you right, you're really asking me to quit; after all the song and dance, that's what this boils down to." Red bellowed as if he'd been physically assaulted.

Roger took the phone from Red. "Might there not be a reprieve? Might we not find a way to keep Red?"

The lawyer thought of one approach the proprietors might find acceptable: dropping petty and misdemeanor crimes, reporting only felonies.

"Leave it to a big city lawyer," snorted Red.

Then Roger told Red, "They're willing to let you stay on as editor. But you got to 'restrain yourself, learn to take orders. Leave policy matters to the proprietors.' No more discussion. There you have it."

Red silently picked his teeth.

Roger said, "You can still save your job."

Red scoffed.

"People will understand. They'll forget."

"Too many enemies. Too many noses rubbed in the dirt. The people in this town would never forgive me. They'd forget nothing. I sold out, that's what they'd remember."

At length he gathered himself up from his desk littered with newspapers, copy paper, mail, pop bottles, coffee mugs, and waving away the insects started down the staircase, his body swaying, as if on a shifting deck. He moved under a terrible strain, for his body was man-sized but his legs were dwarf-like, supported by steel braces. As he made his way down to the street he kept saying, "Time to haul in the flag. The last bastion of liberty has been breached."

We drove around to Main street, where the cooling sidewalks had been "rolled up" for hours.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Until now, said Red, we'd been the last line of defense in Sanford and York County. But all that was changed. The absentee proprietors had just trampled upon the First Amendment and no one in town seemed to care.

"Roger was going down to the composing room and tell Joe Adler to kill the Nutter story," I said.

Red shrugged. The paper was no longer his responsibility.

"You know what? You're free now to go after the Boston *Globe*." Red's dream was to cover sports for a metropolitan daily like the *Globe*.

"You ought to call the *Globe*. They know you."

Red was the *Globe*'s stringer in southeastern Maine, a job worth an inch or two of space in the big metroplitan daily every other month or so, for which they threw him a few dollars.

"It's a pipe dream. A paper like that'd never hire a cripple to cover sports. Can you imagine them sending someone like me to Fenway or the Gardens?"

"I'd keep after the *Globe*," I said.

"Maybe I'll do some time for my brother."

His older brother, a successful restaurateur in Florida, owned a sporting goods store in Sanford. He'd been after Red to give up the paper and run the place for him. Red wasn't going to starve.

As for me, I was torn. One part of me wanted to quit in protest. "They shouldn't be allowed to get away with it. They take twenty years of a man's life and throw it out the window." This was the part of me saying that if I didn't quit, I was betraying Red.

"I'm going to quit," I said. "I don't want to work here anymore. I'll tell Roger in the morning."

"Whoa, hold on," said Red. "This thing has nothing to do with you."

"I'll find a daily," I said. "I'll get a little more experience and get a job on a daily." There was a daily in Biddeford, another mill town not far from Sanford. The Biddeford paper, with a broader interest in the world, was something to strive for.

"With what I've taught you so far, you can do better than Biddeford." Red considered any paper in the *Tribune* circulation area, weekly or daily, an unworthy competitor.

"What about Rochester?"

He began to smile.

Our prime competitor was another weekly just across the state line in Rochester, New Hampshire. The two papers covered much of the same territory. Red was always muttering about his opposite number, wondering what he was up to next, and warning me to be on the lookout for any scoops he might attempt to snare from under our very noses.

Most weeks the *Tribune* bested its rival, and Red gloried in the triumphs. "They didn't lay a glove on us," he'd chortle, holding up both front pages. He liked to picture his rival as going around in frustration, muttering, "How do they do it? One scoop after another, week after week?"

But one week—the week leading to Easter Sunday—Red beckoned to Isabel and me, saying, "Run up the white flag. They've topped us this week."

He held up the Rochester paper. In the boldest type it proclaimed, "CHRIST HAS RISEN!"

SEAN WEBB

Scene in a Snowdome Diorama

Thug angel shaking down deer. Big blonde
pompadour and five o'clock shadow.
A weak white wing that will never fly juts
from his semen pearled robe. A stub of cigarette
hangs from his lips. He has the deer by the throat.
"You owe me big," he appears to say, "for your life."
They are alone before the one dimensional
forest, a jagged wall of witness that stands
mute at the rear of the meadow. It is a world so
poor they'd be lucky to rouse twenty snowflakes
to celebrate the season. When you know
each flake by name, you need not worry
getting lost in a storm. Ether descends,
crowns heads, contributes to poor posture.
The night sky and forest floor are painted indigo
indicating a dark dance has commenced. The angel
pales to the earth's clay that listlessly engages
the hooves of the animal. Such an ugly little world,
domed and static. But not to the creator, who
envisioned this a poignant scene—a kind spirit
reaching out to a meek soul—like a poem lilting
from a watercolor page. Of course this animal
living on the brink of total disaster knows
only fear. Maybe our assorted realities converge
into one mixed up scene that engages our senses
as we sort through it like a drop box of clothes.
It's still pretty good what can be found for thirty nine
cents in the local thrift's bin of oddball ephemera—
a shaken world, churning in my hand.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now he said, "You're just eccentric enough to go to Rochester."

"If I go to Rochester I'll get revenge for what they've done to you."

"How do you propose to do that?"

"Scooping the *Tribune* every week."

"Every week?"

"I won't have to go to the courts or the cops for my headlines. I'll get 'em all in church."

"You would, too," said Red grinning widely. He was a great atheist.

Nothing changed so far as my job was concerned. I continued to cover police, court, school board, selectmen, service clubs, and sports from Little League through high school and American Legion baseball, where I often doubled as the official scorer.

On Thursday mornings when the paper came out I still helped out in the back shop, inserting the shoppers' guides and delivering the papers to the stores and collecting the week's sales from the merchants.

Funny thing, but I began doing my best work after Red left. People in town even remarked about my pieces, quoting them, and this spurred me on, along with the new editor's compliments. Where Red had been downright contemptuous of my stuff, editing harshly, Elizabeth Mitchell was extravagant in her praise and ran almost everything I wrote just as it came from my typewiter. A conscientious Yankee of middle-age, she lacked Red's humor and passion but she was not an apologist for the Boston company that owned us. She simply tried to cover the news as best she could, and she went about it in a professional manner.

Of course I resented her terribly, but Elizabeth took that in stride.

"I know how you feel about Red," she said. "It was a shame how that business turned out, and I sympathize with Red, but the world is an imperfect place. No one is indispensable. Red was living in a cocoon."

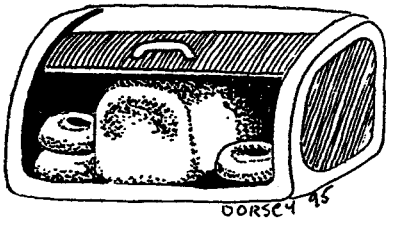
Isabel, who'd known Red all her life, said, "Red has a lot of good qualities but he's also pig-headed, and vain. He's had his own way so long he's forgotten his place."

She thought I was behaving like a kid.

The new editor hoped I'd stay on in Sanford. Addressing my dream of finding redemption in California, she said, "Sometimes it's better to be a big fish in a little pond than a little fish in a big pond."

It wasn't what I wanted to hear.

Nonetheless, I began writing better, feeling more confident, covering my beat more aggressively. The cops were furious with me for writing up a bungled arrest, and when next I dropped into the station they waved little American flags in my face. (This was progress.) Another time Judge Marshall called me into his chambers to admonish me for ridiculing a defense lawyer in a criminal case. The lawyer was young and finding his way. "You know more criminal law than he does right now, you're more familiar with the proceedings. He's still learning." (I was taking hold.) After reading an impassioned column I'd written on behalf of Junior Legion baseball, a shopkeeper told me, "Now I know the pen is mightier than the sword." (A taste of glory.)



I kept up with Red, though, making it a point to drop in from time to time at the Dugout, the shop he managed for his brother. The store was squeaky clean, sporting goods of all descriptions arrayed on racks and tables, the walls filled with action sports scenes. Red sat next to the register, hopelessly miscast in his role of Main Street merchant.

Whenever I showed up he took to razzing me, especially when there were hangers-on present to hoot him on. He'd say, "How can you stand working for the sons of bitches? I thought you were an honest reporter? How long are you going to let 'em keep putting your name in the paper? Where's your pride?" And so on. My visits provided him with a few welcome laughs.

I SPENT MY LAST NIGHT in Sanford with Red in his blue Ford up on Main Street. It was late October. We joked a little, he teased me some, and then turning to me during a long silence said, "So it's California or bust."

"Yep. Things will be better out there. It's still a young state."

"Land of opportunity."

"That's what I figure. Got to be better out there. I'm going to find a courageous paper. One with guts."

"They're out there. You just got to put in the legwork."

"I will, even if I have to dig ditches to tide me over."

"They're bound to be out there. California is a big place."

"You'd do the same, wouldn't you, if you were my age?"

"I'd find an honest rag, one that wasn't afraid to speak out. And have the time of my life."

"Boy, wouldn't that be something."

"We'd pull no punches."

"No holy cows."

"My God," said Red. "Think of the time we could have right here in Sanford if only we had proprietors who believed in the U.S. Constitution!"

READING OUR WORDS today, more than 40 years later, leaves me incredulous. Now there is scarcely a well-informed citizen in the country who ascribes any ideals to the press, or puts any faith in what the press purports to stand for. But Red and I were living in a different age, when it was widely believed the press did care passionately about justice and fair play, that the press was indeed democracy's watchdog, that the press championed victims—the vulnerable, the weak, the poor. Anyone caught saying such a thing today would be dismissed as a knave or a fool. And properly so. But those were innocent days. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What Becomes Debris

MICHAEL ERARD

I BEGAN PICKING UP change on the street over a year ago—at first mostly pennies, here and around. What I started without qualms has turned into a habit and then something of a crusade, because so many pennies and other coins too have fallen to the ground. If you look sometime, you'll see: the streets and sidewalks of America are heavy-ripe with change.

All summer and fall I made several dollars from picking up change. It was free money. You could do it too. Keep your eyes peeled. I found it on my regular paths, and I was delighted to find it, because I know money does not come easily. I know.

The money on the street is not pretty because it does not have to be, since it is money on the street. The pennies have all got the shine kicked out of them. In parking garages and along the tines of steel sewer grates and on the linoleum, the pennies get themselves beat up, all of the fine lines of the die work cussed and broken, the edges flanged. I found one on the road, bent and mangled as if chewed by a million teeth. Sometimes I am surprised that I am able to see the coins, they are so dark, at times like the soil. Sometimes I bend down for circles of dried flattened gum.

The occasional dime is hot metal punctuation. It shines, has heated up and up on the asphalt in the summer sun, and in my palm it feels like a bullet blown right through my palm. No pain, just an intensity. Then, against my skin the dime cools and I pocket it.

Unlike veins of ore, the streets are never depleted. Left to fallow, the streets yield more and more pennies. Owners used to close mine shafts in order to allow precious metals to regenerate in the mine depths, but the metal does not come back in mines. On the streets, yes. So I'm not worried about competition from other people. Go ahead.

Sometimes I have wondered if someone is baiting me. Paranoia? Listen: I find twelve cents—a dime and two pennies—together on a sidewalk. In the middle, as if placed, and exactly in that amount. Over and over. So obvious, like bait, and everyone else too smart fish to pick it up. Twelve cents. Uncannily always twelve cents, over and over. Twelve cents.

If you add it all up, I figure that I make an average of two cents a day. With or without the twelve cents.

I didn't find a bill or a quarter for a long time. Finally, found a quarter in the weight room at the gym. Then found two cents at a pay phone. Still no paper money.

I used to dream about discovering fields of nickels and, like the soldier in the Hans Christian Andersen tale, filling my pockets so full that I can hardly walk, and then emptying them when I discover fields of dimes. These nickel-and-dime dreams end before I get to the Susan B. Anthony dollars.

Three cents near where the homeless kids hang out. A penny where old men drunks sit in the shade of a dorm. A penny at the entrance of a night club. Two pennies in the gutter. One penny by the steps of the church. One penny in front of a Coke machine. This reiteration makes me think that these aren't cents, they're pennies. When cents are forgotten, they are pennies. Cents are currency and have value. But pennies are imprinted copper discs. We spend cents. We drop and forget pennies.

A tip: I always do well, very well, in parking lots. I found a ten in a police station parking lot once. Last week I found a dollar, finally. Laundromats are ripe. No one minds the pennies that fall out of pockets.

Money is eerie when it is forgotten—as if lopped off from something larger. A piece of heaven, perhaps.

Forgetting pennies is an extravagance that everyone can afford. Even the homeless do it, that's clear—forget pennies, that is. They have walked right over the ones that I pick up behind them and then they will turn around and spare change me. If I handed them the

Coming in the NAR:

New fiction by George V. Higgins, Mark Halliday, Lucia Nevai, & Peter Cherches

Poetry by Dionisio Martinez, Jeanne Foster, & Katharine Gregg

Non-fiction by Steven Vincent, Robert Newton, Roy R. Behrens, & Perry Glasser

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An original paperback

The Whole Story
Editors on Fiction

A Collection of Essays and Stories
Edited by Warren Slesinger

ISBN 0-930769-12-0
312 pages $19.95

Each of the editors explains the choice of a particular story, describes the editorial procedures and defines the editorial policies of the literary magazine in which the story originally appeared.

Written especially for this collection, each of the essays contains the complete text of an exemplary story by a contemporary writer with the editor's comments.

The Alaska Quarterly Review
The Antioch Review
CALYX, A Journal of the Arts and Literature by Women
The Carolina Quarterly
Chelsea
Fiction
The Georgia Review
The Gettysburg Review
The Greensboro Review
Indiana Review
The Iowa Review
Iowa Woman
New England Review
New Letters
The North American Review
Northwest Review
Prairie Schooner
The Sewanee Review
Shenandoah
Southwest Review
The Texas Quarterly
The Threepenny Review
The Virginia Quarterly Review

Also of interest to students, teachers and writers

Spreading the Word
Editors on Poetry

ISBN 0-937069-10-4 $14.95

The Bench Press

1355 Raintree Drive Columbia SC 29212
803-781-7232

penny, they would look at me strangely, act offended. We have a social solidarity when it comes to overlooking currency. How many people have thrown out pennies after sweeping the floor of the apartment they are going to move out of?

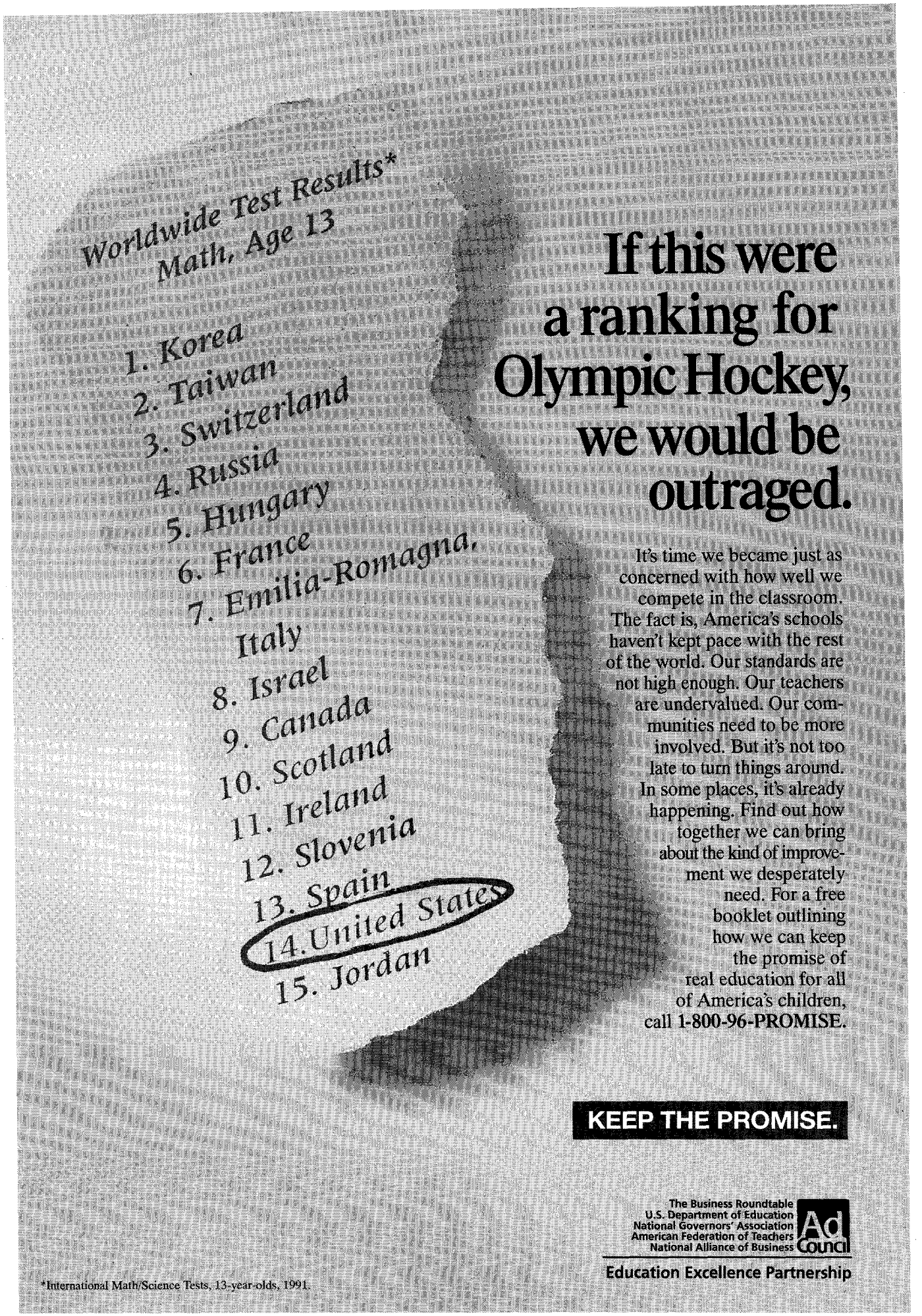
Penny in the gutter all the students pass over on their way to campus. A quarter in the pay phone. Not a common find because not a common mistake. Plus it's instinct to check for them. Lucrative, though. Penny at the movie theater. Dime in crack between concrete curb and asphalt of street. It looked washed there, then jammed in. Another dime under someone's foot at the swimming pool.

George Orwell once said that beggars are maligned because they have made the unfortunate decision of choosing a career that does not pay well. This forgotten money is maligned too. Every little piece of it has the unfortunate, oddly contrary characteristic, by virtue of its ubiquitous presence, of not being worth enough. This is why we all can afford to forget pennies.

For the earth-bound nature of forgotten change highlights the basis for the value of money, which lies in a certain quality of speed and lightness. Money is valuable because it connects to other places, commodities, more money. Forgotten money does not connect. What I find is not capital; it does not and cannot flow, will never leave here and circulate the earth, becoming more than its sums, moved by forces outside of itself. The amounts are so small that their value is inert; in the alchemy of finance, this money is more like neon, helium, or argon than gold, silver, platinum. Only larger quantities react with other money, with the myriad agents of the world.

So jangling hard in my pockets, in my jar, these dimes and pennies are fallen out, excluded, like particulate matter from the economy's matrix. The money is too heavy. It is not digital and not virtual but real, hard, and immediate: too good to be true, and too real to be good. □

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



If this were a ranking for Olympic Hockey, we would be outraged.

It's time we became just as concerned with how well we compete in the classroom. The fact is, America's schools haven't kept pace with the rest of the world. Our standards are not high enough. Our teachers are undervalued. Our communities need to be more involved. But it's not too late to turn things around. In some places, it's already happening. Find out how together we can bring about the kind of improvement we desperately need. For a free booklet outlining how we can keep the promise of real education for all of America's children, call **1-800-96-PROMISE.**

KEEP THE PROMISE.

The Business Roundtable
U.S. Department of Education
National Governors' Association
American Federation of Teachers
National Alliance of Business
Ad Council

Education Excellence Partnership

*International Math/Science Tests, 13-year-olds, 1991.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

QUARTERLY WEST
312 OLPIN UNION
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
SALT LAKE CITY UT 84112

Fiction by:
Kyle Jarrard
Ben Stoltzfus & Judith Palmer
George Dila
Kevin Casey
Dan Coffey

Poetry by:
Todd Smith
Jay Ladin
Michael Waters
A. Manette Ansay
Sean Webb

Nonfiction by:
John R. Campbell
Lawrence L. Sturhahn
Peter Chilson
Mel Lavine
Michael Erard

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED